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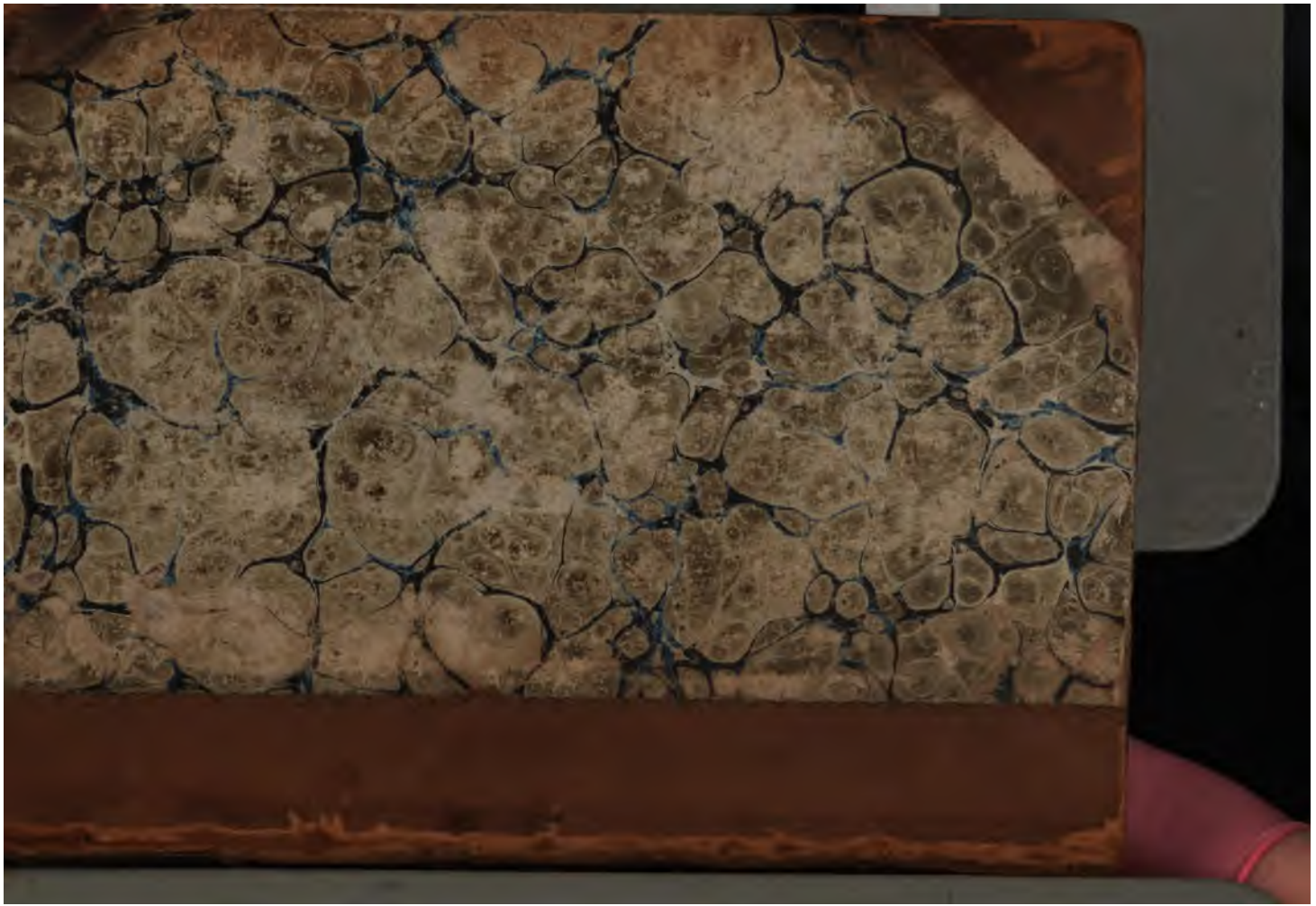

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CREATION.

A POEM.

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CREATION.

10

A POEM,

BY

WILLIAM BALL.

" Write the things which thou hast seen, the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." REVELATIONS.

LONDON:

EDWARD BULL, HOLLES STREET.

MDCCCXXX.

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GUNNELL AND SHEARMAN, 13, SALISBURY SQUARE.

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CREATION.

THE INDUCTION.

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CREATION.

THE INDUCTION.

HAIL! Solitude! home of the friendless, hail!
I fear thee not, nor love thee, nor evoke,
But find thee ever near me; nor avail,
To drive thee from my side, the shallow joke,
Charming the cheek with gladness, not the heart;
Nor the weak, idle—worse than idle, song,
Filling the ear with sweetness, but apart,
Leaving the torpid breast; nor giddy throng

Roaming through festive city; nor the tide
Of pleasure, business, of joy, or pain,
Of men or things: with me thou wilt abide,
As though all other home thou didst disdain.

Thou know'st I am essentially alone:
Alone, for ever! Ah! these words have power
To chill the soul upon her secret throne,
And blast the pale and solitary flower
Of Hope, which from his garden Adam drew,
And to his hapless race bequeathed, that Joy,
One slight, but all imperishable hue,
Might lend unto the earth; and might alloy,
The total mass of bitterness and shame,
With one celestial flavour; and illume

The mighty darkness with a heavenly flame,
Oft shedding holy brightness through the gloom.

I am alone, although the world around,
To my tired eye, its hard unmeaning face,
Ever presents; and in its ample bound,
I take, unwillingly, a vacant place.

I am alone, although the world's cold hand
Presses to mine; alas! it hath no touch
To warm the failing pulse, or check the sand,
Fast flowing—No! The world is but a crutch
Wherewith I seek my way unto the grave:
It knows not, heeds not me; it is a lord
That gives, capriciously, his lab'ring slave,
Raiment or blows, a fetter or a sword.

I am alone; to mine no human heart
Heaves with full sympathy; and should the earth
Gape and devour me, not one man would start—
Save for himself, perchance!—Yet at my birth,
Gladness was felt, by those who could shed tears,
In after-times, upon my sorrows sore,
Upon my disappointments and my fears;—
But they who wept for me, will weep no more.

Come then, oh, Solitude! we will repair,
To thy handmaiden, pale and soft and meek,
Calm Meditation, virtuous and fair,
With shining eyes, and melancholy cheek:
And, joined with her, we'll seek the aged towers,
Built by Philosophy on the lone shore,

Sadly arrayed with sweet, neglected flowers,
And hushed by Ocean's long, untiring roar.

Thither we wander; Peace hath, haply, there,
Poor and neglected, found her last abode,
Unvisited, save only by the air
That to her nameless dwelling finds a road,
And brings her sweetness on his rustling wings:
In health and freedom there, she lives alone,
And, easily content, no more she wrings
Her soft white hands with toil; but, little known,
Foregoes, forgets, all that is not a good;
Gross superfluity, apparel vain,
Wealth, title, power: and there hath she withstood,
Fraud, violence, flatt'ry, ignorance and pain.

Oh, dear abode! with sober pleasures fraught,
I hail thee, I, whom thou canst yet entice;
Although by men unmerited, unsought,
In this late age of masked and timid vice.

Delivered from repletion, fear and care,
Thither I hie, and in some ancient hall,
With Peace and Freedom, eat my simple fare,
And tell my strange opinions; not in brawl,
But with a nice obedience to the creed
That gives me motive: so, at least, my ears,
Free sounds shall fill, nor my full veins shall bleed
Under the scourge that whips earth's slaves to tears.

And since I am alone, let me review
The various web of life; as in a glass,

See mine own mind and offer honour due,
Or blame, as good or ill alternate pass.

My bosom is an ark, within whose side,
Things clean and unclean, as to that of old,
Come and consort; and o'er life's rushing tide,
My young affections vigorous and bold,
As erst the dove of holy writ, their way,
Took thence, and sought afar a resting place;
Alas! unlike the bird of sacred lay,
They found none, and no olive branch of grace,
Signal of peace in Heaven, on Earth, brought back;
But, pensive, ever held their hopeless round,
O'er a vexed whirlpool, stormy, wild, and black,
Wherein all evils revel and abound.

My enemies are gone, so are my friends;
They congregate where the blind worm repasts;
And ev'ry earthly trav'ller swiftly bends
His steps to join them in their silent fasts.
Not I the last; but yet a little while
I linger in this foolish scene of things
Inept, and wear perforce, a lying smile,
Though pierce'd and writhing with a thousand stings.

The bolt has fallen upon my only hope,
Sole object of my wishes, of my toil;
And I am left alone to strain and grope,
Through the world's vile and frivolous turmoil.

The axle of existence snapped in twain,
The beauty of life lost; for ever gone

Its only usefulness, and ev'ry vein
Ebbing to total lapse; I will not fawn
Upon myself, or others; be they wise,
Or beautiful, or rich, or great, or brave—
By them untrammelled, on my spirit flies,
And thanks them nothing, for that nought they gave.

Again, myself I laud not, know not; where
And what I am, and wherefore; what might be
Or may be still, beyond the bounds of air;
Whither I go, whence came, a mystery!

In ign'rance I began and, so shall end;
All that to me belong are thought and pain;
Active and passive powers, that ever tend
Each other to destroy;—'till now in vain.

The struggle then is ME—I know no more;
This struggle lasts though hast'ning to its close:
Meantime 'tis good that, on this dusky shore,
I leave some trace of him whom no one knows;
But who, unnoticed by this lab'ring age,
In secret, strives to pen a solemn song,
That shall exist upon the letter'd page
Haply in honour, unforgotten long:
That shall exist when he, commix'd with clay,
To undistinguishable dust returns,
Remember'd though invisible; while they,
Who from him stand aloof, shall in their turns
Be nameless and unheeded; lost their power,
Forfeit their wealth, their titles vain forgot;
Then, though they scorned me in their happy hour,
Mine shall, belike, be the more envied lot.

Thus far resentment for their long neglect,
Unmerited I hope, inspires my voice;
I leave them now, and turn me to reflect
Upon the theme, unbidden, of my choice.
Unseen with Solitude I rove, and ask
Wherein I am a debtor to this earth:
And to her ear attentive 'tis my task,
My warring fancies upward from my birth,
In true and fervent language to confide;
She is my judge, as she has been my friend,
The only one that with me would abide:
My song I raise; oh, Solitude, attend!

To Nature I owe nought; to me unkind,
Health, strength, and beauty she refused; she gave

A feeble body and an idle mind;—
What were they did we not outlive the grave?

To Fortune I owe nothing: rank and name,
Riches and dignity, she may deny,
Bar and forbid my progress unto fame,—
But fortune and the world I both defy,
When on myself my rising hopes repose;
My calm heart, to its purpose ever staunch,
Heeds not the coldness of acknowledged foes;
I strain my loos'ning tether and will launch,
Upon the ever-flowing tide of time,
Careless what winds may blow, or billows roar;
I spring away and will above them climb,
Despite the ties that bind me to the shore.

Adventurous, my unknown self I sing,
Me and my many thoughts; hear me who list!
I seek to probe my bosom and to wring,
The secret truth, that I have hereto missed,
From out its rich, but unfrequented fount;
And for such purpose to my heart I turn,
Nor call the muses from their sacred mount,
But with my soul I strive and inly burn.

I ask not any fool's applause, nor care
Although my feeble lungs should pour their cry,
Unhonour'd, on the waters or the air,
And not one human ear or heart be by;
Provided, ever, that the deathless note
Caught by some echo in a list'ning cave,

Again may o'er the hill or valley float,
Sigh in the breeze, or whisper on the wave,
Till heard and heeded by some kindred soul,
Of happier fortune or of finer clay,
Tempered to mitigate and mend the whole,
And stamp his name enduring on my lay.
The strain may live although the Poet die,
Fameless, until some later, kinder age
Shall backward turn regardfully its eye
Upon the dark'ning past, and on that stage
Of evil ill-remembered seek to find
Some fading trace, those antique things among,
Of me unknown, and of my roused mind;
Of me, the unforgotten son of song.

Enough: my tale I tell them; not, indeed,
The foolish actions by me seen or done,
For these import them not; the petty weed,
Beside a rill unknown unto the sun,
Or insect on the mountain, claims regard
Of the near passengers, but, certes, not
Of him who, poring o'er the pictured card,
But sees the mountain as a petty spot.

The dust that I inhabit passeth fast,
And soon will unto other forms adhere;
The mind I have inherited may last;
The balance trepidates with doubt, but fear
Weighs it not wholly down: the tale I tell
Is of my mind, its efforts, musings, all,

Wherein it, struggling, rose, or weakly fell,
I will record; if yet I can recall
The vision wild of insubstantial forms,
Fast flitting into nought, that thronged my soul
In shadowy pageant, like the airy storms,
Grand but incongruous, that sometimes roll
Thund'ring and lightning through the dreamer's
brain,
Who wonders nature has forgot her laws,
Yet, though he gazes in surprise and pain,
But marks th' effect and not enquires the cause.

Myself my theme; a strange one; and unsung
By bard of ancient or of modern days.—
I care not, I! my harp is fully strung,
Time claims my daring, Virtue owns my lays.

My bosom with an influence is filled
Acting on all, although by none avowed;
Yet ill disguised, for who can be so skilled
As to restrain the long intemp'rate crowd
Of feelings fond assembling in his heart,
And by their numbers mighty; in their power
Wresting the mast'ry, with convulsive start,
From the most vigilant, in feeble hour?

Thus Milton sings of God, yet tells with care
That he himself is blind, in tuneful moan;
Thus Tasso bids his shepherd teach the fair
The vices and the baseness of the throne:
The shepherd is his organ, but the bard
Speaks for himself; Ferrara is the place

Where merit is so slighted, where reward
Is destin'd Este's flatterers to grace:
Thus Dante sets in glory Beatrice;
In hell his enemies; in Heaven his sire;
Thus Homer gives all palms to vicious Greece,—
To Latium Virgil consecrates his fire.

What need examples? to thy bosom true,
Oh stranger! turn; with honest ken descry
What in its inmost shrine is hid from view,
And startled thou wilt say, "'Tis! 'tis I!
"Myself the centre around which revolve
"My passions, and from them remotely flow,
"Affection, purpose, action, hope, resolve,
"Motion and rest, vice, virtue, joy and woe."

'Twere hard to seek, hopeless, perhaps, to find
The chains minute, that, small and light effects,
Invariably, inseparably bind,
To the one cause that all impels, connects;
But far more hard it were, closely, to trace,
Th' Almighty hand that out of nothing brought
Alone, the congruous wonders of all space,
That formed at once a pole-star and a thought.
Yet this we not deny; nay, we affirm;
Nay more! so firm our faith that we contend
Him to be viler than the crawling worm
Who to such creed his credence will not lend.

And this is true; yet not, for that shall man,
This feeble ray of the great light divine,

Eternal, increate, in his little span,
The pigmy image of his Maker shine:
Sole cause of all his dwarfish deeds below,
Now triumph in proud Persia or in Ind,
Now drunk in Babylon, by a vile blow,
Kill his rash friend; now, lost his human mind,
Proclaim descent celestial, and demand
Incense and hymns;—then fill a sordid grave:—
In brief and various revolution stand,
A prince, a conqueror, a sot, a slave.

He does not this in his own single power;
But rather, as it seems, he cannot stir,
Save when permitted for a little hour,
Save when far causes numberless concur.

No image of the lonely God supreme
Is Adam fall'n, no primal source of aught;
He lives and acts, rejoicing in a dream,
A phantom-lord of phantoms wisely wrought.
A passive fool, yielding to all around
But all commanding with an air content;
Yet if he raise his arm, or catch a sound,
A thousand foreign natures must consent.

"I think, therefore I am;" proclaim the schools;
"I think, therefore I act," were full as true;
But wherefore think I? Can no learned rules
Unveil this mystery to the mental view?

There are two worlds; the one within is me
The other is without, I neither know;

But feel, methinks, that neither world is free,
Being urged, they urge; receiving they bestow;
Like wheels in engines, which with borrowed power,
Press upon their associates and impel
Others, themselves impelled. The tinted flower
Constrained shoots from the earth; so from the bell
Rushes its gloomy voice. I think and straight
My thought becomes an act, and is the cause
Of thought in others; and, this done, I wait,
For a new influence; but Nature's laws
Leave me not idle long: the secret springs
That I discern not, move and I obey;
Were I untouched, the general mass of things
Must pass unheeded as an unseen ray.
But others think and act and press on me,
Obedient they to others, I to them:

Nought is effect, nought cause, but in degree;—
Spring from the root alike trunk, branch, and stem.

If by my mind unfelt, what is the power
Leads me to shun Orvieto's far-sought flask,
Or flee from Beauty in her dangerous hour?
Declare, my soul! or, rather, need I ask?
The one brings to my body pain; my soul
Shrinks from the tyrannous pow'r the other wields;
Both are effects and neither can control
Any, but HE, who clothes the hills and fields.
I move not, stop not, but as urged or stayed
By motive or by matter, and I trust
That ev'ry act is but a cause obeyed
By nature's mix'd half passion and half dust.

I think now well, now ill. I were not man
Did I not often to the wrong incline;
Not, therefore, I accuse the general plan,
Or at my lot, the common lot, repine:
Not, therefore, weak indulgence I desire;
My cross I bear without impatient moan;
My wrong opinions blame, but still, require
That he who never errs, cast the first stone.

My native land, my language will declare:
A bounteous land, although to me unkind,
In it nor competence, nor honour fair,
Nor ease, nor home, nor hope of home I find;—
But rank, disdainful of plebeian pain,—
But wealth, that tramples on a poor man's hope,—

But ignorance, incurious and vain,
With whom dejected merit cannot cope,—
But interest, that keeps the paths of life,
(Save the rough highway,) grown with many a weed,
And shuts the avenues with roses rife
Often for aye against aspiring need;—
But prejudice invincible, and state,
And fumes of haughtiness and pride of birth,
Against their fellows arming men like hate,
Holding we spring unequal from the earth;—
And a wide-spread, idolatry of gold,
A cold and calculating lust, a shame
Unknown unto our virtuous sires of old
Whose ancient bosoms burned for fame, for fame!
Their sons, less noble, suffer this gross vice:
The vulgar great and the great vulgar met,

Dare now, too often, a dishon'ring price
On virtue, genius, beauty, friendship set.

Thy vices these and more; but greater far,
Thy virtues shoot a ray of endless length;
Virtues that all thy vices cannot mar:
That lift thee into grandeur, beauty, strength.

'Tis thine with vigour ever to contend
Against the wrong e'en though the wrong prevail;
'Tis thine with dignity to rise or bend,
To triumph nobly, gracefully to fail.
'Tis thine, and thine alone to own thy faults
And mend them when thou may'st;—at least to strive
Along the narrow way, where folly halts,
Of self-amendment, where the noble thrive.

Thy lib'ral tongue calls by its name the thing,
Thou canst not justify and wilt not hide,
Nor in thy ear abused false praises ring,
Of those whose lips applaud, whose hearts deride.
Thine is the hue of honour, thine the arm
That rises in defence of injured man;
Thy noble many live in proud alarm
To watch the flame of virtue and to fan.

Thy vices and thy virtues these; both known,
The former sharply felt, suffice to make
Thy son an exile from his long loved home;
For these I honour thee, for those forsake.

Yet, still, my land! I love thy noble name,
And noble nature; love thy wave-bound shore;

Thy equal laws, thy liberty, thy fame,
Live and will live in my heart's deepest core.
I love thy love of goodness, knowledge, art;
Thy gen'rous hand, thine all surveying eye,
I love thy nobler and thy wiser part,
Nay, e'en thy very soil, thy very sky.
The valley that is thine and bosky hill,
Are dear to me,—the hamlets, rivers, lakes;
The cot, in childhood known, or crystal rill
Springs to my mem'ry, and my heart o'ertakes.
Thy mighty destiny methinks I see,
All to outlive the lesser nations round,
Mother of empires, knit by the broad sea,
Long shall thy manners grow, thy language sound.
Destruction cannot reach thee; thy large life,
Fountained by many hearts, defies her wiles,

And shouldst thou fall at home by age or strife,
Thou livest on, on continents, in isles,
A polypus of power that hath no date,
No mortal period, but still swells and stands,
A phœnix-kingdom, ever young, elate,
A single tribe in separated bands.—
Rome fell, and Greece, and Persia; Egypt old,
Syria, and Judah fade in thick'ning time.
Be many other noble empires told,
Their ages crushed together make not thine.

Yet far from thee I wander; other climes
Nearer the sun, their warmth around me shed:
Here wrong Ambition ruled in ancient times.
Here smoked her altars, and her victims bled.

Oh, land of mightiest memories! thy soil,
Fat with the blood of ages, may produce
Abundance that is not the price of toil,
But who shall teach thee what its honest use?
Should it not feed and comfort and sustain
The hungry, comfortless, the old, the frail?
Whence then are thy rich glades the homes of pain?
Wherefore doth sorrow sigh in ev'ry vale?
Belike Heaven's vengeful hand thus weighs thee down,
Mindful of what thou hast thyself forgot;
Thy avarice remorseless, and the crowd
Of bleeding nations that thou pitiedst not,
What time thy sharp and cruel brand smote wide
The north and south, and, by thy fetters worn,

Bled on thy Moloch shrines of ire and pride
A victim world, thy sacrifice and scorn.
Thy sword is broken now, thy strength decayed,
Thy pride is left, thy glory is no more.
Thy laurels, e'en thy bays, in dust are laid,
And but the ghost of grandeur haunts thy shore.
Dare not repine, although the good bestowed
By thee, is not remembered, since the ill
By ill is not repaid; although the goad
Of long adversity may wound thee still!
Ingratitude to Heaven is power misused.
This was thy grievous fault, therefore I see
The wide world thankless and thy name abused,—
Thankless thyself to Heaven, as man to thee.
Thy fate is like to his who glared, in mirth,
A meteor of wrath and power unblest,

Purging, perchance, some grossness from the earth,
But trenching with deep thunder-scars her breast.

But not of these 'tis now my task to speak,
The land I love, and that where I abide
Are themes too mighty for a harp so weak;
I leave them to their lot, and, roving wide,
Man and his works I quit, and seek the shade
Forlorn, of silent forest, or the nook
By all untrod, or unfrequented glade
For musing fitted, or dark shadowy brook,
'Mid weeds and rushes, creeping through a glen
Unvisited, unknown; or else some cave
Beside unpeopled waters; nature then
Unseals my heart, and, straight, its hasty wave

Flows full and clear, as from an antique fount
Forgotten on some mountain's top forlorn
Gushes the unsought tide in full amount,
Washing its base, by human step unworn.

'Tis done: I am among the hills, and here
My sad heart's home I find; upon my cheek
Plays the free wind, and, in my list'ning ear,
Sings its loud hymn, and calls on me to speak,
Myself sole auditor; and here I dare
Accept his counsel, here, where none contend,
Or, servile, cringe, or awe with haughty stare
Or flatter or belie, please or offend.

I am alone; all Heaven above me soars,
Grovels below all Earth; the thunder cloud

Hurries to where the distant tempest roars,
And o'er yon servile city casts a shroud.

Screams the dark eagle as he sails away
Scorning the blast, the bolt, the hissing rain;
On some far shore he seeks his trembling prey,
Then calmly to his eyrie mounts again.

I stand upon a cliff: above me piled
The huge, broad firmament its arch sublime
Boundless expands; below me, undefiled
Heaves the deep main. Type of insatiate time
That all devours, art thou, far rolling sea!
And thou, oh, blue abyss! above, around,
Art a grand image of eternity;
Fearful, amazing, fathomless, profound

A thousand keels furrow the murm'ring tide,
Pass, are forgotten; and a thousand more
Appear, advance, approach, cluster, divide,
Vanish, and leave it what it was before.
And Time like thee, forgetful Ocean drear,
The future hath not and the past hath lost;
A moving present all, of hope or fear,
Sleeping in sunlight or by tempest tost.

All passes;—all! nor leaves a lasting trace.
Our sons forget us,—we our sires forgot.
Evil and good fleet by—glory, disgrace;
What is we hail, and heed not what is not.

But in the measureless immense on high,
The countless lamps of Heaven revolve, return,

Resume their paths rejoicing, in the sky;—
Their endless doom to wander and to burn.
The present, there, we give unto neglect;
The past and future are eternity.
Changeless they roll in order and effect,
And all that is, once was; that was, will be.

I gaze upon these emblems, and am fain,
Man and the world to shun or to forego;
Upon this high and naked rock remain,
Honours and hopes forget, and joy and woe.
And here set up my rest, and glance mine eye
Downward upon the prone and dusty earth,
Upward upon the pure and radiant sky,
And from my heart, tear its false mask of mirth.

Back to my bosom crowd the thoughts of yore,
My spirit revels with his ancient mates.
Throbs with new life unto his central core,
And this new life to virtue consecrates.

Millions of orbs, above, wheel on their course;
Thousands of leagues of solid depth descend:
Yet can I rise o'er all to being's source,
Or plunge below to where all life has end.
My thought now walks the wave, now cleaves the ground,
O'erleaping, bursting, nature's firmest bars;
Now dives to central night, now, at one bound,
Takes his far path amid the unknown stars.

Struggling in the great gulf the visual ray,
By endless depth distressed, trembles and sinks;
Yet on, my mind pursues his awful way,
Nor from the mighty solitude e'er shrinks.

I pass the crystal airs and ether void,
The stars, the galaxy, the tiding light,—
And, upward, on the wings of fancy buoyed,
I reach the bounds of uncreated night:
And in this scene of beauty and of fear,
I can forget my tenement of clay,
And call around me forms for ever dear,
Of hungry death the unforgotten prey.

Here vice falls from me as a garment dark
And loathsome, that unto my spirit clung;

That hid its ever pure and burning spark,
And, all deforming, on my temper hung.

My passions die away, for in this scene
Sacred and lonely, what to me are men?
What kingdoms, worlds? abject and poor and mean,
They fade in distance from my wond'ring ken.

In this high solitude, no echoes wake
The world's loud clamours, boisterous and long;
Then here all trammels from my soul I shake,
And rouse to freedom with my rising song.
My voice I fully loose, and boldly say,
No bondsman's shackle shall my free thought wear;
No slavish tribute to false taste I pay,
Or for applause or censure, long or care.

I will not offer, nor for gold nor fame,
Immoral maxims to the sons of vice;
I will not veil the poet's sacred name,
To pamper sickly minds with fond device
Of nonsense clad in gorgeous raiment rich,—
Ideas slight in many words dissolved,
Or trifling meanings triflers to bewitch,
Or pretty sense in pretty sound involved.
The sensual sweetness too of tinkling rhyme
A light, but tedious, and servile chain,
A barb'rous minstrelsy, a foolish chime,
Here I abjure, as infantine and vain.

Awake, awake! Oh, ye my sleeping powers;
Arise, Arise! and aid me to begin:

My way to radiant Fame's eternal bowers,
Help me, through poverty and toil to win.

And thou, whose eye shall on these labours fall,
With grave, fraternal pain my errors tell:
To err thou knowest, is the lot of all;
Be humble in thy judgment, and farewell!

CREATION.

BOOK I.

Invocation—Chaos—The realm of Nought—The Creation of the universe—The Formation of the Elements—Their several offices and uses—Earth and its creatures—Vegetation—The animal kingdom—Reflections on Man—Birds—Fishes—Insects—Quadrupeds—Death the common fate of all creation.

To what thou shalt perform and I dispose.
Hear me, thou idle slave; arise! obey!

I place thee on the grand and awful bounds
Of darkness and of light; on the right hand,
Far sweep away, in distance measureless,
Countless in number, horrible in size,
The masses of creation; on they roll,
And rise and wheel in space, descend and climb,
A twining knot of circles, wreathing round,
The garland of our God: and, on the left,
The sterile reign of broad, eternal Night,
Th' untroubled empire of repose, is fixed.

There stands th' unshaken throne of primal Nought,
And through all distance and all height, all depth,

His fearful realms extend; save, here, a space,
Scooped out from his dominions, wherein dwells
A power amazing and unknown, though nam'd,
Nay, question'd, by blaspheming man insane.

Greater is HE than aged Night forlorn,
The sole eternal else, in attributes
Trascendent and mysterious and dread;
His starry crown, refulgent and sublime,
Bounds the domains of his most dark compeer.

Ages innum'rable have rolled between
The hour in which thou livest, and the time
When first our God shot forth his influence
On his immortal mate; from his misrule

Wrested a space immense, and pressing on,
From victory to vict'ry, won and wins,
For ever and for aye. The sullen king,
His opposite impassive, shrinks, not yields;
And sees, with tranquil eye, a universe
Invade his endless realms: his secret throne,
In motionless security, abides
Within the gulf of darkness uttermost;
Invincibly quiescent. Tell me then,
Oh, thou, my secret mind! canst thou not rove
Back, through the lapse of unrecorded time,
To when the conflict first began between
Th' Almighty Highest and reluctant Nought?

Eternal Godhead sate in the abyss:
He will'd creation, and effulgent, straight,

Oceans of lightning rent the savage void,
And scourging thunders, such as God alone
Might hear and be, shook the wide gloom inert
The rushing flames divine, the rule of Night,
Precursors clamorous and keen, first brake:
Fast following, and more resistless still,
A shrieking wind ploughed round a hollow sphere,
And fill'd the womb of darkness with a power
Unfelt before. The pregnant mother, soon,
Conceiv'd and bore a wondrous progeny
Of whirling eddies, frozen and condens'd
To multitudinous and pond'rous stars,
Dark rolling round and round; submissive all,
To the relentless gale. The breath divine,
Contrariwise effus'd, anew swept forth,

Disrupting wide, and into countless parts,
The marvels of all time, this aggregate
Unbounded, cleft. The sev'ring orbs, forthwith,
To diff'rent centres cling; with double curve
Some roll, with treble others, and with more,
With numberless inflexions some; till all,
Remote or near, in various vassalage,
And multifold dependence, hold their way
Around the concave night that all contains.

Again th' all-working thought is full in act,
Not as before of terror and of might,
Enormous and victorious; but grand,
Coercive, wise: light clave unto the stars;
To their attendant orbs, darkness and air.

O'er the black sun, envelope luminous,
A glist'ring veil impervious, was cast,
Fountain exhaustless of far roving day
To him, to us. Around our abject globe
Fled howling waters which, converging, mov'd
And met in whelming seas: dry land appear'd;
Uprose the hills, in solid ribs robust,
And stay'd the waters in their oozy beds.
Then flatten'd plains stretch'd out, and valleys sank,
And rocks abrupt were piled unto the clouds;
And from their vap'rous fount, the lucent streams
Ran, tributary, to th' insatiate deep:
Blind, humid caves pierced through the stable case
Of hills and continents; and central heat,
Through winding crannies, drove the molten ores
In rough and various metallic streams.

Long water wrought above and fire beneath:
Myriads of congruous masses crystalline,
In beauty and in love, the one unites;
The other, fiercer power, deforming toils,
And binds repulsive natures; boiling up
The stubborn minerals in coarse compounds,
Refractory in vain, by fire concrete
Subdued and fused, foundations of a globe.

In bright or sullen layers, concentric, deep,
Are cast the bases of innum'rous worlds:
Long ages roll away, and yet no change,
No scaring harbinger of slow decay,
Hath touch'd the wondrous fabric; and shall fleet
All future to all past, and time shall end,

Ere, smoke by final ruin, shall dissolve
The solid piles tremendous, crush'd to dust,
To air, to nothing: blasted by red fire,
And swept away, all mortal things impure,
Shall cease to be for ever. Time shall stop;
His scythe despised, his grey locks unbelov'd,
To bulky Nought enchain'd, he moves no more:
Then felon Death shall die; eternal peace
With life eternal reign, changeless and pure,
Perfect and firm as immortality,
As vast, as wonderful, and as divine;
Great heritage of the great heirs of God.

Again, again, rushes the sacred breath
Creative through the universal sphere;

Not softer the light sigh of waking spring,
Of dropping sound and dewy air, composed,
With odours pregnant: soothing, sweet and mild,
Yet penetrative, as the balm of time,
Healer of every anguish, beautiful,
Strays the new power, abundant, fast, and far
Felt and obeyed: delightful as young love,
It wanders and, with fond embrace fecund,
All nature clasps and all impregns with life.

Again I turn to thee, oh Earth! in thee,
Crescent and multiform and many-hued,
Fair vegetation, through the cloven sod,
Its million fibres pushes, warm with life.
Young flowers adorn the land, and stately trees,

With shady vesture grove, diffuse and sad,
The mountain's nakedness and shame conceal.
Wide garments green, now vivid and now dark,
Enwrap the broad, round sides of well-pleased Earth,
Fringe the deep rivers and bedeck the rocks,
Reluctant, their large limbs, with gay attire,
To ornament or hide: endless in form,
In colour, strength, and qualities occult,
In habits and in size, shoot forth all plants.
Those tuft the mountain's tops, these crawl the ground;
While some frequent the dry and lonely sands,
And others plunge beneath the deepest wave
Of booming ocean: vig'rous some, austere,
Disdainful and sublime, sojourn alone;
Of frailer texture others, suppliant, cling

To natures of more poize, and, glad, accept
Dependance for protection. Human tongue
Their numbers cannot reckon; human thought
Their various shapes imagine, or their fruits,
Noxious or wholesome, name; their sapid pulps,
In flavour sweet or tart, juicy or dry,
Are destin'd for continuous repasts,
In aftertimes, to flatter or appease
Hunger or appetite, of brute or man.
Their solid trunks, soft stems, bark, fibres, sap,
Give him a shelter from inclement skies,
And ships to cross the main; engines to sail,
Decent and needful raiment, med'cine, all
That makes life grateful, makes life possible.

To our necessities some minister; but more
Unto our pleasures serve; the race of flowers,
Gentle and graceful, lend to the coarse earth
Perfume and ornament; close thickets yield
Freshness and shade or soften'd light serene,
Or playful, as when, after summer show'r,
The whole umbrageous covert twinkling shines
Glist'ring with falling gems. The fringed palm,
Solemn as orient lord, idly beholds,
Benignant the subjacent plain, and waves
His long and hairy arms in peace and joy,
Majestic and delighting: bristly the pine
Climbs, hardy, to the mountain's icy crest,
And beards the angry thunder and the storm,
Unthank'd, to lavish verdure evergreen

Upon a hideous and blasted rock;
As kindness on ingratitude, on vice,
Erring, its bounty, too profuse, bestows.
The shallow brook, penurious and slow,
Is prankt with humble rushes, water weeds
And long green grass and flowers; or, in the wave,
Plashes the dipping willow. On the tower,
Of other, later days, man's toil and pride,
Bruis'd by great Time dishonouring, and stained,
Round which sad waters flow and loud winds sing,
Fair emblems of free tears and praises high,
Fantastic garlands of fond ivy creep,
Meet honours for its long enduring age:
It pictures true a warrior battle worn,
A human ruin, voiced by fame, that sleeps,

The combat o'er, locked in the vain embrace
Of laurels, in the tomb of victory.

Thus, nature, art thou ever seen, intent,
The greatest beauty and the greatest use,
Harmonious, to join; neither preferred;
For though the use precede, yet, superposed,
Immediate charms adorn, latent inhere,
Incipient shoot, or usher into life.

Form'd to conceal, embellish or announce,
Like cloak of state, enrich'd with threads of gold
Which hides and warms, protects and decorates,
The earth's large mantle, rich in wiser use,
And grander beauty, various and elect,

Is spread by holiest hands: oh, man! behold,
And lay thy forehead humbly in the dust,
Before the awful Father of the skies,
Who! from his throne sublime, stoops to thy wants,
And gives thee up the labours of a God.

Young airs of life, upon the silent orb,
Now play, in festive diligence extreme,
At the divine behest: rapid they rove,
Kissing the sullen hills and smiling plains;
In dancing speed they rush through matted woods;
Curl the green brine of ocean; sweep the wastes
Of arid sands, and climb the quiv'ring trees;
Ruffle the sleeping rivers, wing the winds,
Far trav'lling north or south; the icy pole

They visit, and the line; the eyeless caves
Of middle earth, the coral couch profound
Of welt'ring seas; gaily they soar aloft,
To light insufferable, or far dive
To central midnight, but, above, below,
Or flutt'ring round in swelling rings convolv'd,
They shed a clement influence, sky-born,
Beneficent, amazing. Forms are seen
Emerging fast from plain and rustling wood,
From rigid rocks, broad rivers, mountains bare
From sands and shallows, and rank grass untrod,
Luxuriant and long, fair forms are seen,
Self-moving, feeling, animate, alive.

Then sound was heard, by beings numberless
Emitted various, the pipe of birds,

Melodious, touched the wind; the feeble tribes
Creeping or wing'd, of insects, utter notes
With organs harsh and weak, but in the choir
Of universal carols, gay and sweet.
The buzzing air shakes with uncounted wings;
Amazed, the waters populous, obey
The stroke of busy fins innumerable,
Roar the deep woods with voices, full, robust,
Of quadrupeds unnamed, in vigour high,
From strong lungs breathing vocal storms of sound;
Incongruous and wild, of sport or ire.
Oh, Power almighty and benevolent!
What tongue can tell, what heart of man conceive,
Though trembling deeply with the great desire,
The wonders of thy hand? mutely I gaze,

My disobedient organs fix'd in shame
At their own meanness infinite, nor move
Nor dare, with airy word inadequate,
Oh, how inadequate! thy labours name.

This earth, thy temple, edifice immense,
Arched over by yon sapphire vault sublime,
Within whose span I worship thee in love;
This earth is a poor mole, an outwork mean,
On thy creation's farthest verge forlorn,
With our blind planets all, and our small sun,
A petty captain of the universe
Leading a straggling troop of slight regard:
These things I see, these minor things admire,
And contemplate in vain. How rise to thee?

Oh, God ineffable! low, very low,
I sink before thy throne magnificent,
Beneath thy footstool, yonder starry cope;
But never can humility decline
Unto the calm abjection due to thee
From the frail insect, at thy glorious feet
Prostrated in dishonourable dust.

Yet even my faint voice, in thy great name
Uplifted, may, unto the farthest shore
Of rolling earth, far echoing resound;
Imperishable, by its deathless theme,
Long as the tongue I speak shall live,
Among Earth's many nations; hence I dare,
Though conscious of defect, again resume,
In feeble notes unworthy my bold hymn.

The valleys and the hills are fill'd with life
The waters and the air; the mighty chain
Of animation stretches, endless, down
From the great forms of water and of land,
Leviathan and Mammoth, down, far down,
To where the living atom moves unseen,
Beyond the reach of sight or optic tube.

Social or hostile, similar, diverse
They range along life's unsought path obscure
In functions various as in form and size;
Yet all their food discover, and their mates,
And, suddenly, increase and multiply.
And fill the regions wide, with joyful life,
With labour and with songs. Crowd in the trees,

With painted wings and downy breast elate,
The natives of the groves; bright-eyed and quick,
Though feeble limb'd, of graceful stature small,
They leap upon the wind, and, buoyant, rise,
In music giv'n to ornament, not aid
Their pleasant lives, to pastime dedicate;
Secure, on rapid wings, they swim in air,
Fish in the gliding pool or skim the plain.

To rugged cliffs or Alpine hills retired,
Lords of their race, of larger, nobler forms,
Some live alone, in dignity of power,
In haughty mood unsocial, free but stern,
And eye the morning sun, or, downward, glance
A beam far reaching to the hollow vale.

Distant and dark, where, in the rear of night,
Long loitering shadows tarry to oppose
Morn's rosy heralds, in their armour bright,
Ever victorious, ever combating.

The feather'd hermits, on a sudden, rise,
Arch the proud neck and strike the shiv'ring air
With firm and ample pinions: on they shoot,
In tranquil poize advancing through the sky,
Their round eyes fixed on earth; until repast,
Afar descried, allures, or am'rous mate;
Then, with a whizzing rush, from out the clouds
They drop upon the land, in measured fall,
Innocuous, a thousand fathom down.

Many are wing'd sojourners of the earth
That, calm, resign their natures volatile,
That glory in their beauteous vestments vain,
Yet with the beasts associate and live:
Of man the shameful image, who, content
With what to brutes is giv'n, gross pleasures, base,
His nobler destiny, vocation high,
Forgets, or from them only draws, unwise,
A jargon of few ign'rant words impure;
A claim usurping, erring, vain, unjust,
Of dignity, supremacy, and right.

The ocean trembles with unwonted life,
Throb the deep veins of earth; the waters dark
And silent, of broad lakes and floods profound,

And still profounder seas, with shining things
Large-eyed and fresh attired, darting around,
And gleaming like young rainbows, fill and live.

The deep tremendous, inland sea and lake,
The mighty flood, the river, stream, brook, rill,
Down to the liquid silver thread that winds,
Uncertain of its road, o'er the brown rock,
All, all, are peopled, all! The scaly kind
Or slimy, prowling glad, disport and dart,
Into each corner of their wat'ry world,
On oary fins they seek or they avoid
Associate or enemy: in pairs
Prolific couple and find secret haunts
Adapted to their pleasures and their needs;

Or, in migrating nations met secure,
In serried ranks, across the trackless main
A mighty host, they wander. On their skirts,
Of battle doubtful, hang the monstrous forms
That make the ocean hideous: ravenous
And armed with coward weapons, conscious strength,
Robbers marine, they roam and, savage, prey
Upon the peaceful, weak inhabitants
Of their enormous home;—the warriors they,
Of the vast, liquid, surging continent.

To man resembling in his evil hour,
When, with the guilt of Cain, he lifts his hand
Against his weaker brother: man unlike
Who on his kind, his race, his fellow wreaks

The wrath of his bad heart; without a cause,
A need, an instinct, to exonerate
The culpable survivor, who oft finds
When blood is spilt and ill accomplished,
Nor anger gratified nor food obtain'd,
Nor the command imperious obeyed,
Of HIM that bade him never fail to be
A son, a brother, father, friend, to all
Who might such title claim, such helper seek.
The finny warriors but obey the law
Of their remorseless natures; fell they are,
But not perverse; by instinct driv'n, they prey
In hungry pain, on kind diverse, for food;
But not for carnage, not for wider bounds,
Fantastical, by clam'rous folly claimed,

And destined to no use; for empire, no,
Nor fame; their necessary meal in joy
They raven from the deep; but stop, at once,
And turn to gamesome frolic and wild glee,
Assuag'd the raging torment that impell'd
Their ign'rant hearts to ravage and to war.

How different is man, how vile, how base,
To these compared! long ages roll away,
Yet still, untaught by precept, menace, pain,
Rebellious to his bosom and his God,
Gleams in his redder hand the ruddy glaive
Wet with his brother's blood; glances the flame
From engines diabolical to hurl
A storm of rushing iron, wrapt in fire

And smoke and thunder, on his fellow man.
The vital tides bedew the quaking plain ;
The mangled flesh torn from the living limbs
Is trampled into mire by armed hoofs
Of neighing chargers stumbling in deep gore.
Swell the long cry of battle shrieks of pain,
And curses horrible, and groans and prayers,
And mutter'd threats insane, in madd'ning death,
And shouts of rage infernal, echoing far,
Awaking vengeance in the gazing sky,
Rejoicing in the caves of gladden'd hell.
Yet still the thunder in his palace sleeps,
Idly oblivious in the distant clouds,
Nor comes horrific with his burning bolts

To sweep us from the earth: stay'd by the hand
Of the long suffering Master of the skies.

Humiliated, sorrowful, confused,
I force my heart away, and pour my thoughts
Into a purer channel; close my mind
Against the ill I may not remedy,
And will no longer scan the fouler side
Of my associate man. I will believe
The good seed bounteous heaven bestowed may shoot,
Yet shoot, though fall'n upon a barren soil,
Or springing mix'd with over many tares.

Ah me! ah me! what joy, what pain is this
That with unearthly influence fills my soul?

There is a voice of clarions in my mind;
A messenger, although the face and form
Are in a dreadful glory, blinding, hid,
That seems deputed from some mighty lord,
Now tells me, "Mourner, go thy way in peace;
"It is not thine, to see the coming hour;
"But come it shall, when from the east and west,
"Speaking one language, holding one belief,
"And loving like true brothers, men shall meet,
"Shall vindicate their natures and obey,
"Virtuous and wise, the high, the sole command,
"Given them by Him, whom but to name in awe,
"I am unworthy. Go: Be happy, man;
"And that thou mayst be so, thy fellow love."

The beauteous figure indistinct, is gone;
Its voice I heard not, but its thought perceiv'd
A tongueless voice, of sweetest, clearest tone,
Unlike a human accent, to me spake,
And fill'd me with a glad and thrilling sense
Harmonious, not uttered, but inspired,
And in my ears still lingers, not a sound,
A spirit of supernal music; strange,
Unutterably strange! in meaning rich,
But incommunicable; and there fell
Between me and this world of wrath and pain,
A film of radiance; and I felt an air,
Methought of Heav'n; whereat my spirit strove
To drink the balmy breath, and catch the note,
Sobbing from harp celestial, and behold

The veiled face divine, and follow far
The soundless steps retiring; but in vain:
Upon me cold and fast the thoughts of life
Terrestrial and wretched, come and wind
Their chains around me, and the vision flies.

Again my song I raise, my theme pursue,
And trace the various picture, darkly seen,
By fancy through the faithless prism of sense
That I would fain, but cannot, here lay down.

The life-bestowing power is still on earth
Still vigorous and warm, and the gross air
And wand'ring wave it saturates and fills
With insect forms that baffle human search,

Nor tell their numbers to enquiring man,
Their ages, uses, functions, pains, or joys,
Capacities or origin or end.
A petty volume is each humble form,
Replete with wonders bound in elfin shapes;
Some horrible and foul, evil and dire,
And others, fine as air, flash sudden light,
Coloured like richest gems, shaped or misshaped
Like morning fancies, when the sleeping brain
Teems with fantastic beauty. Wings have they,
And wondrous eyes, horns, legs, and tails, and stings,
Distracting with variety immense,
Of hue, mien, habits, polity and powers.
From out their millions, chief the ant and bee,
The wisest of earth's creatures, might teach man,

Could man, conceited, learn, that all his skill
Attains not to the wisdom calm and just,
By providence in gracious bounty, lent
To these sage, grave, and happy citizens,
That ruled by few, by simple, perfect laws,
To us unknown, ne'er quit the narrow path
Of painful duties useful, nor demand
One private good stol'n from the gen'ral weal.

Next sprang the quadrupeds from pregnant earth,
Various as the gay people of the air
Or those of ocean. The strong lion yawns
As rousing from repose, then snuffs the gale
And with large nostrils, eager, seeks the taint

Of food or, savage mate; or, idly slow,
Paces the shady wood, his large domain.

Deep in the dingle or the cany marsh
Couches the watchful tiger, and observes
The lazy river-horse, in weeds and mire
Wallowing half sunk; or sudden bounds in air
And plunges sure upon some feebler prey,
Wand'ring in hapless hour, at distance wide,
Around his haunt, led by pursuit, or flight,
Or sportful pastime through the fatal shades.
Yet from his victim will he straight forbear,
And swiftly slink in coward haste away,
Should the dread lion near, his voice unloose
In awful volleys through the quailing glades.

Hid in his leafy home, of cumbrous size,
But wisdom rare, in conscious strength secure,
The tranquil elephant his sweet repast,
Temp'rate although abundant, calmly takes;
Nor heeds the uproar of his wild comates,
Nor shuns nor fears aggression impotent:
But should he be assail'd, his latent force
Tremendous he puts forth, in anger just
And terrible: gored by his rending tusks
And thrown to earth, with his strong clasping trunk
He tugs the struggling leopard, now infirm,
And breaks him on a rock; or with his foot,
Heavy and hard, cracks his large bones with ease,
And punishes his folly insolent
With frightful death as quittance well deserved.

In a cool belt of trees, beside a spring,
Not lavish, but still fresh and bright and pure,
Within the sultry desert, patient kneels
The camel, and, meek hearted, eyes the sands
Far shining round; then turns to the scant wave,
And providently quaffs repeated draughts,
Destin'd to quench the morrow's thirst intense,
Or, for a larger space, hoarded with care,
In small and secret cells, and thence expressed
With frugal caution, from returning drought,
And parching fever it preserves awhile
The patient beast laborious; a drudge,
For ill-paid hire, of the wise tyrant great,
Unthankful and unjust. From mart to mart,
Wide sands between, the precious merchandize,

In aftertimes, he carries carefully
With strength submissive, governed by a rod
Wielded presumptuously by puny hands,
Which, docile and incurious, he obeys.

With warlike bellow and impatient heel
Shakes the wide plain, the heavy bull incensed,
Rushing, with awkward speed and furious heart,
To meet his angry foe, advancing fast,
To strive for empire and voluptuous rule
Over the lowing herd, whose milky breath
Pours health and sweetness on the vagrant wind.

With pond'rous shock they meet, arm'd front to front,
And back recoil amazed, with straining hams

Bow'd by the stern repulse, slowly they rise
In greater fury, undiminish'd power,
And press to fatal battle; the large eye,
Struck by the well aimed horn, drops from the head,
Or the broad steaming nostril, rent and pierced,
Pours out abundantly a gushing tide,
And the strong beast by stronger pain subdued,
Or lost in timid blindness, from the fray,
Daunted, retires, and yields the bloody strife.

Neighing and galloping the nimble steed
Rejoins his brethren, and they rush away,
Scoffing at distance, to far floods or hills,
With gamesome ease, for freshness or for shade;
Their long white tails flash on the eddying wind,
Their trampling hoofs to num'rous echoes call,

And rouse the list'ning wilderness around.
Yet not unoft, with stealthy foot unmark'd,
The hungry panther creeps upon the herd,
With wily motion, hasty though constrained;
Through the sear tangled grass he holds his way,
In noiseless care, till, at one mighty leap,
On the broad shoulders of the noble beast,
He sits secure, a rider horrible.
Snorts the scared horse, and through the swelling flood
Dashes in madness, striving to shake off
His agonizing burden; but in vain
He tasks his nervous strength, tripled by rage,
In ill-aimed effort lost: through the deep brake
He tears a path, then shoots across the heath

And climbs the hill and plunges down the steep;
Away, away he hurries; but the pard,
Close squatting, and with crooked claws infixed
Firm in his bleeding flanks, holds on with ease,
And with long yellow teeth tears his strong neck,
Till the red life is drained, and on the plain
He rolls a vanquished prey. Gorged with blood
The victor sleeps with fulness satisfied;
His speckled skin, soiled with his late repast,
His deep chest heaving with unconscious breath,
And his large limbs in careless ease diffused;
Nor wakes till, fitful, on the rising wind,
Comes a faint cry appalling; distant yet,
But gaining on the ear, it rises fast
And swells and separates in howl and bark

Vociferous and fell: creeps o'er a ridge
Far off, a moving darkness; on it rolls,
And sweeps across the intervening plain
Like the grey shade that noontide cloud projects
Upon the land, when sailing o'er the disk
Of the great regent luminous of day;
Nearer it rushes, opens, and displays
Voracious, bony, lean, a straining pack
Of wild dogs, howling, by their instinct led,
Towards the spotted savage, and his meal
In fragments strewn around, and to the air
Yielding a smell of death. Starts the quick beast,
With angry heart afraid, and on light foot,
In easy swiftness turns, hoping to gain,
Before the distant battle clip him round,

His home, the dingy fortress of the woods :
By mighty bounds begins his long career,
Then, gradual, sinks into a steady trot,
Rapid and firm, but ever on his ear,
Importunate, comes the loud note of war,
Swelling upon the blast; a transient pause
Gives him a moment's hope; he turns and sees,
Gorging the refuse of his large repast,
The greedy hounds, that for a while, delay
The unforgotten chace, but then resume,
And gain upon the ireful tyrant fell.
Raging with toil unwont and glaring dark,
Scorning his race of flight, and heated, now
To brave th' unwelcome strife, at last he stops,
As their quick pattering feet around him press;

And as he turns around their hot breaths meet,
As 'twere in earnest parle of furious hate.
Soon under his strong paw, yelping in death,
Sinks the first heedless foe; but, rushing on,
Leap on him fast subduing numbers fierce
And tear his feet and pierce his panting side,
A fatal host resistless, although each
Singly opposed were feeble; although now
Many, from his fell bite, sink on the ground
With cureless hurt and with long choking howl,
Lick their own gushing bowels and expire:
Yet not the less is his sure fall decreed;
Already from his shrinking side new jaws
Their hateful food, rend with remorseless fang,
And eat him while he combats, struggles, dies.

Within the forests other tribes abide
Of manners gentle, or of natures free;
With all-surpassing fleetness gifted those;
These with defence impenetrably firm,
Of jointed mail or tough or thorny coat,
Or cunning, far o'ermatching simple force.

There, gay and playful, leaps the light gazelle
Dark-eyed, quick-eared and timorous, as shame,
Fleeing with mouth half-filled with unchewed herbs
If chance the blast lift up his voice afar
And roughly chide the wild. The hedge-hog frail,
Shrunk to a prickly ball, rolls on, unharmed,
Under the huge and bleeding paw light laid,
In wondering caution on his piercing thorns.

The slow and savage otter, in the wave
Hides him securely from the stronger wolf.
The hero of old fables wisely writ,
Thrice armed in matchless cunning, see the fox,
Baffle his enemy with endless wiles
Scarcely surpassed by man: the sturdy cock,
Despite his beak and spurs, resigns his life:
The gander grave cackles apace, in vain,
To all his foolish race musing around.
These and the weaker many are his prey,
By fraud inveigled or by force o'erpower'd,
Himself to good old age lives on in ease;
Then, stiff and toothless, wasted and subdued
By long pursuing hunger, lank and bare,
He yields him up to all unsparing Time.

Here the round mouse, mistrustful, eyes the cat
Basking and purring in the mid-day sun,
With her soft paw in seeming negligence
Stretched on the sward, and her large vision veil'd,
Or drawn to a fine line, yet ever fill'd
With treacherous sight oblique, and her fell heart
Awake, although her body seems to sleep;
Or peeping from his habitation small
The heedless nibbler, by the strong pounced owl
Is seized and carried to the distant nest.

All are to all prey or destroyer; all
Happy, save in life's painful close, in death;
To them to us alike, adjudged by fate:
A rig'rous but short evil, mixed of all

The various bitterness that, in the cup
Of many blessings, Destiny has poured
To unknown ends mysterious, but harsh
To the reluctant flesh : with feeble eye
And baffled ever, reason gazes sad,
Nor finds a clue that through the porches dark
Of entrance into life or exit hence,
Leads the unquiet mind secure to homes,
To happy homes, beyond the frozen grave.

One thrilling truth is known, that all must die ;
And though high wisdom merciful permits,
All to forget these tidings terrible,
Yet not forgets the ancient phantom dire
To seize and fling the number'd shaft that brings,

To the defenceless bosom, that last pain
That snaps the chords of life; what glorious hopes
May gild that evil day, what splendour pure,
Outglancing from the solemn mists immense
That o'er our being hover, may, sublime,
Flame through the valley dark, as sense decays
And lets its lightnings in, another hour,
Perchance, may tell; if to my willing tongue
Come the bold notes inspir'd; till then unsung
I leave the mighty lesson and forbear
To touch, with hand unsure, a theme so high.

CREATION.

BOOK II.

Progress of the Creation—The Superhuman world—Angels—Sylphs —Elves—Fays—Genii—Gnomes.

CREATION.

BOOK II.

Now paused the labour huge; around
The grand Artificer upon all gazed,
And stayed his untired hand inoperant:
All roll'd within his ken unlimited;
He saw that all was good: he saw and smiled,
And, at the joy celestial, nature thrilled
With a new travail raptured and replete.

In burning circles undulating wide,
Hotter than Equinoctial noon, far moved

A wand'ring glory, faint and pale reflex
Of the Creator's gladness: first diffused,
It gathers into shapes of solid light,
Robed with Heaven's beauty, marvellous and grand;
Th' immediate ministers of power divine.

Child of the dust, I cannot rise to them,
Nor tell their virtues supereminent.

Next, shorn of half its force, and light and heat,
In slighter moulds confined, inferior forms
It generates of ambient spirits high;
Seraphs and angels named in earthly phrase.
Nor these can fancy picture, nor the eye
Of the rapt poet see; far, far, away

In mansions wonderful, they live alone,
In difference immense and distance lost.

Next, fables tell, that, downward trav'lling wide,
The weak'ning power, then wrought the num'rous hordes
Of superlunar sprites, diverse in sex
The first, and, in descending scale, to know
Communicated joys of thoughtful love:
The ray divine now mixed with ether pure,
A substance fair and bright, indeed, but still,
Changeful, and subject to decay, with which
The taste of imperfection first begins.
Not as in higher natures are their hearts
All fixed on Him, the lonely and the true

The undeceiving and unfailing One;
But gently drawn aside by ties of kind,
Whence each is link'd to each; none stand apart
And, selfish, arrogate peculiar good;
His own high being in another form,
Each loves in all; the image of himself,
Stampt on a different sex; one long embrace
Binds all in rapture full; for there no choice
Is known, no age and no decay; no pride,
No doubt and no deceit; no cov'ring there
Of mortal texture wraps the bosom up;
But the free glance roves gladly through and through
Each loved associate, baffled by no mask
Of cunning or of jealousy or fear,
No false respects the latent joy intense

Deny, delay, or sadden, or rebuke.
No ign'rant shame ties up the lib'ral tongue,
Or chains the mutual wish in silence cold:
Implicit falsehood all, and vain pretence,
Inheritance accurst of sinful Earth.

No sullen tint their bright existence shades,
Save knowledge of mortality; for they,
Unwilling, stoop unto the laws of death:
Their gentle lives thousands of ages tell,
And then, without one pang, they all dissolve
And like a thought forgotten, pass away.

Their lofty labours are of noblest mark.
'Tis theirs to roll in ever curving lines;

The sounding spheres, to shoot the rapid light,
And cleanse to brightness all the dark'ning orbs;
To seize the distant comet, and compel
The long hair'd fugitive, reluctant, back
To trace his erring, solitary path,
Whither his mighty lord, the stedfast sun,
Attends the threat'ning stranger undismayed.
'Tis theirs in rings ethereal to turn
Whole congregations vast of primal stars
With all their retinues of planets blind;
Or, higher still, they busy drive and wheel
Myriads of hordes celestial like to these,
Along a viewless circle; or still more,
These masses all and thousands similar
They urge along the paths of endless space,

Around the one deep centre ultimate.
'Twere long to tell their toils sublime; in brief,
'Tis theirs to work the daily miracles
That the Divinity announce, attest,
To him who, humbly, reads the learned page
Of nature eloquent, and true and wise.
Many their mighty tasks; I name not all
Nor know; my mortal and imperfect mind
Is with a long and lasting darkness fill'd,
And faintly I descry, in mists and shades,
The wild and various wonders I rehearse.

Progressive still the plastic glory fled
And filled inferior regions with a race,
Impure, as mixed with vapours gross, terrene.

Sensual they are and powerful; elf and fay,
Genie and gnome; wiser and longer lived
Than man, acquainted too with pain and shame
Like him, and stuff'd with lusts and wants and hopes:
Their chequer'd lives resemble ours in kind,
Though higher in degree, in function, power.

To virtue some are dedicate, though more
In profligate repose best love to lie
Dissolved in raging pleasure which demands
The physic of refreshing anguish, meet
And merited and needful, to restore
The vigour lost in long and foul excess,
Degrading, which our meaner natures share.
Their various works are numberless, and strange

To human ears. 'Tis theirs to shape the flame
And tinge the cloud, and feed the rill; the air
To thrust upon his course; in the rich mine
To harden the small gem; to fill with spars
The dripping cave, to blow the sullen fires
That heave below the mountain horrible,
Or sordid toil in offices unclean
To us; to them, right pleasant, welcome, pure.

The Genies in two classes, good and ill,
Rebellious these, those faithful, ride the blast
Majestic, and on puny man bestow
Their hate or friendship: warring in great bands
Those chain or these unloose, in struggle dire,
The giant thunder clamorous, and swerve

Or guide the bolt to the devoted head:
Appease or rouse the foolish sex, and, fierce,
His ign'rant strength, resistless, turn on man.
Some live in magical abodes and hide
Earth's wealth in narrow space, by mystic charm,
And dread, and danger, often ill secured
From patient avarice, or simple chance.

Subject they are to spells and talismans
Framed by forbidden arts, and slaves they bow
To objects mean, of virtues strange possessed.
Enchantment all their beings wild and vain,
Of the fast teeming East a progeny
Uncouth, albeit amusive and beloved.

The Fays with smaller faculties endowed,
Haunt brooks and meads or bushy covert close;
Apparell'd strangely in the motley spoils
Yielded or stolen, but tastefully arranged,
Of glitt'ring insects or gay flowers: well pleased
A vagrant life they lead, of joyful dance
And midnight music full, upon the lawn
Their tiny feet a circlet small imprint,
And fast away to greenwood shade they hie,
If scared by mortal foot. A king and queen
Govern and guide their numbers, and they shun,
With jealous care, th' approach and taint of man,
But if surprised, sudden are they in ire,
Malicious and vindictive, although frail,
And the ill-starr'd intruder they torment

With pettish wrath and feeble means of harm,
Bewild'ring some in quagmires or in bogs,
And pinching others with their fingers slight;
From some they steal small objects of light note,
And others scare with sights and sounds of fear
Or fancied transformations grim and quaint;
No further stretch of damage holds their power.

An idle race and vain and frivolous,
They live with us, but neither foes nor friends;
Their functions they perform neglectfully,
Which are to aid and honour virtues mild,
And punish fibs and gibes and sluttish faults:
Or fill sequester'd springs with healing power
And light the beacon in the dangerous marsh;
With crooked justice, pilfer ill-gained gold,

And on ill-humour turn his own intent;
The irksome fool with wrong suspicion mad
As, pondering how to prove his error truth,
At doubtful dawn, high noon or twilight grey,
In fretful musing his lone way he takes,
They follow, and, from ev'ry grove and brake
Dim ravine, weedy pool, or spreading tree
Cry "Cuckoo! cuckoo!" to his jealous ear.
Or, turning all their petty sleights to good,
They warn the rustic maiden yielding fast,
At dusky eve, in mute forsaken bower
Too boldly wooed and sore by love assailed;
Or chace the village libertine away
By sudden lights within the coppice lone.
But these their duties, in capricious mood,
They slight, or they observe, as fancy leads.

In hollow hills they live or in dark grots
By bubbling founts retired, or in cool vales
Perfumed with springing flowers, or else in shells,
That strew the margin of the sandy sea,
Their painted habitations they assume,
And lie in utter secrecy convolv'd.

Farewell, ye gentle sprites! your slender forms
Around me press, entreating larger space
And larger honours, but in vain: your names,
Your pranks, and frolics wild, my gliding verse
Records not, lest, to other castes unjust,
I find no room in my fast flowing song
To tell their titles with observance due.

Come on, ye Gnomes! swart children of the mine,
In vig'rous ugliness ye start to view,
From the dark entrails of tormented earth,
Wherein the fierce volcano's fires ye light,
Or fill the crannies huge with molten ores,
Or temper the pure gem, and tinge, and shape,
Then hide it, hoard it up, in secret nooks,
A useless treasure unenjoyed; till man
Forces his way unto your gloomy homes,
And plunders all your wealth. Ye shrink away
From touch of human kind, and leave your stores;
But, as you dig your path through yielding rocks,
Your glaring eyes the startled miner sees
And thinks them winding, subterranean fires,
Precursive of disaster: in dismay,

Awhile he stands aghast, the creeping beam,
Watching in speechless gaze, with quailing heart,
And lists the echoes, that your voices wake
Within your massy citadel of stone;
Till, all withdrawn into some fissure black,
You leave him to his fancies and his fears,
And sinking fast to utmost depths terrene,
Your councils meet and meditate on war,
But covert, on your mortal visitant.
Then, through new channels, pour ye midnight lakes
To whelm him and his labours; or ye lead
The hurtful vapours blue and pestilent,
To stifle him with death unseen; or bring
The flame from Earth's deep magazines of fire,
And light the gas voluminous; one throe

Shakes the wide caves and cracks the lofty vaults,
While white flames quiver round and thunders roar,
And the pent air, from swarthy prison cold,
Freed, lawless, wrestles with the patient earth,
The stubborn rocks incumbent and the plain
Disrupting with expansion vigorous,
And on the hapless miner and his toils,
Heaping, impervious, a mighty mound.

Upon the hill the watch-dog hears the coil,
And wakes the valley with his distant bay;
While the pale shepherd guides his startled flock
To pastures less remote, in lower glens.

Thus live in painful toil and sable glooms,
These natives of eternal shades profound,

Content with their strange lot, although at times,
By human beauty smitten, in strange guise,
They wait by mountain spring, the virgin lorn
Who hither, from far hamlet, timid comes,
To lave her young limbs in the secret wave:
One blushing moment is her lovely form
To solitude unveiled, then instant hid,
From the cold mountain, from the sky, the air,
As though they gazed too boldly; nay, conceal'd,
E'en from herself beneath the ripples gay:
But scarce has she appeas'd her tender shame,
Scarce felt the coolness of the unsunn'd tide,
When, from a cleaving rock, in wild alarm,
She sees a hideous form emerge, and straight,
Is seized by ruthless arms robust; at once,

With his fair prize, down through obsequious earth,
Sinks the dark ravisher to halls of gems,
Bedight with pomp amazing; his abode.

And then she finds he is a mighty lord
And absolute, though kind, of empire wide
Plunged in wild depths and everlasting night,
Lasting save where a gentle glory breaks,
Eternal, from thick walls of polish'd stones.
And there must she her beauty consecrate
To his wild pleasure, and her virtues all
On him bestow, happy, if by the boon
She please her fond but captious elfin knight,
And lay his dang'rous jealousy asleep.
There by the distant world mourned and forgot;

But not forgetting,—grief remembers long—
She lives th' unwilling parent of a race
Hideously shaped, and savage and perverse,
Save where the gentle mother struggles through,
Whom natures different forbid to love,
As woman's full and yearning heart requires;
Yet to her bosom, heaving with fond pain,
She holds them oft, grieving that from their sire
They aught inherit; on their dwarfish forms
The dews of her affliction frequent fall,
When, hidden from all eyes and deeply wrung
By bitter feelings unavowed, she yields
A passage to the grief long hidden, close,
That swells within her soul; nor ugly shape,
Nor natures different, nor minds perverse,

Can sunder the strong tie that to her child
For ever and for ever binds her heart,
Her bruised heart, faithful, in all its pain,
To the wise instinct that commands her love.

Benighted, too, in depth of piny woods,
To shelt'ring cave retired, the shepherd lad,
Drops in sweet sleep and sees, in peaceful dreams,
His native valley and his cottage thatch,
Peeping above the aged holly fence;
He hears the chiding cock or chucking hen,
Or merry bells remote in chiming peal,
Or, from his mother, takes the sacred kiss
Of welcome home, till, with a sudden start,
A cry, an agony, he wakes from sleep,

And shrinks from lips unknown, panting on his;
And sees a female form, in vestments sad,
Of uncouth aspect and ungainly shape,
Blushing with joy, yet touched with bashfulness
As off'ring unsought love: he gazes round,
Upon a dome magnificent, wherein
Far-blazing diamonds mock the light of day,
Which to revisit he may hope no more.
From the broad em'rald floor, tall columns rise
Of chrysolite or sapphire fairly wrought;
While all around, in rich disorder gay,
Strange things of unknown use appear up-pil'd,
Of onyx or of opal made, or red
With glowing rubies blushing like thick flame,
Or topaz warm shedding a golden light.

And while his mind still staggers with amaze,
A bevy bold of lothely damsels small,
Lead him to rich repasts of viands new,
And ply him with full cups of liquor rare;
Next to a golden couch of softest down,
Hid in a niche profound, with antic shews
Replete with mystic sense and solemn form,
Escort him gravely, then straight glide away
In silence meet, and leave the bashful boy
With a young dame, their haughty queen and his,
The maiden sov'reign of these glorious caves.

Enough of these; to a still fouler race,
The howling elves, I turn; abortions base
Who shaking bogs or black morass, infest,

Or tangled wilderness, or ruins grey;
In crumbling vaults abide, or dungeons black
Or savage dens, whence the rank beast retires
To more commodious lair; by stagnant lakes
Or in the jagged rifts of aged rocks,
Or gulleys of worn mountains, where, adown,
Plunge sullen waters, oft they rove in bands.

Fulvid and lean they are, froward, perverse,
Ghastly. Sometimes, they trundle, on the ground
Like sever'd heads with goggling eyes infixed,
And gape and mow and gibber as they roll;
Or from a quickset or a bramble fence,
Or thick green flags that hide a muddy stream
They stare like village giglot, and aloud

Laugh to the mocking echoes, till, full seen,
On slender shanks they rise, with dragon's tail,
And griffin's claws, and harpy's leathern wing;
Or with swag bellies monstrous crawl along,
Down rugged steeps, or through green lanes, light bound,
Hardly distinguished from a formless clod;
Or lie, like wayward urchin, in a rut
And wail with finger in the eye, and moan;
Or on high wall or ivied gothic tower,
In seeming danger, sit alone and shout,
Or scream amain when evening shades grow grey.
Despiteful unto man, with spectral forms,
The homeward clown, late plodding from the fair,
Or wedding, trimm'd in holyday attire,

When qualms of tardy conscience shake him sore,
As the dread hour unfolds night's broadest wing,
And mem'ry tells of former sports impure,
They harass, and compel to break through thorn,
Or wade through mire, or jump into deep slough;
Avenging thus some unwise fair betray'd,
Or cheat effected in his traffic mean,
Or rule of sage sobriety transgressed.

Sometimes the goodwife they pursue and vex
As forth alone she hies, at foggy morn,
To distant market bound, in serious mood,
On honest gain intent and how to use
In needful purchases her future store.
Nought she suspects that, in her panniers neat,

A dozen imps not bigger than her eggs,
Are, graceless, rifling all her rural wealth.
Or to her home they go and near the cot
Carelessly left without a benison,
Where sleeps her harmless child, they sit and mark
How they may steal a grace, a blemish fix:
One from the open mouth snatches, in haste,
Its pearls and roses, leaving, in their stead;
A hare-lip, or fang-teeth, or bristly mole;
Another in a dimple plants a wart,
Freckles the cheek, or blears the light blue eye,
Or squints the vision that he cannot quench;
A third then pricks the ear, the fingers webs,
Contracts the leg, straightens the curly locks,
Or ties the tongue; a fourth, a fifth, advance,

To heap deformities upon the babe,
'Till holy word, uttered by chance, thereby,
Or good deed done around, or tolling bell,
That calls to morning prayer, scares them away
In pain and rage and fear; yet to their homes
They bear the plunder'd comeliness with pride
And to their urchins these stolen charms bequeath
In rich exchange for ugliness resigned.

Nor these are all; but late I find, that far,
Too far, too long, I wander from my theme,
With graver matter fraught: wherefore, at once,
Avaunt, ye sprites forlorn! I leave you now,
Nor tell the legends old and beautiful,
That peopled nature with unnumbered tribes,

Aërial, sylvan, aqueous, submarine,
On lonely hills abiding, in green shades,
Or under gurgling waters, by cool founts,
In mossy caves, or deep within the tides
Of welt'ring ocean: nor the fables wild
Of darker ages barb'rous, I recount;
Fantastic all, whether of wizard grave,
Or sorc'ress fair, or yelling hag obscene,
On besom hoisted through careering storms,
To meet, at Benevent, her sisters foul,
And dance about the aged hazel grey.

These and the foolish monsters of romance,
The arms enchanted and the fated knight,
Or hellish dragon fell, in triple brass,

Enscaled and ever spitting pois'nous foam,
Or lumb'ring giant, weak in little wit,
Or palaces magnific, wrought by spell,
And kept by goblins for their revels drear,
Or cacodemon from the roasting fire
Fled, for a space, to tempt the sighing nun
Unwillingly immured in saintly cell,
With the sweet thoughts forbidden; or the friar,
On midnight errand sped, to lead astray,
And leave in haunts illicit; or assail,
With deeply tempting sublunary good,
The cup unwatch'd, mantling with spicy wine,
Or warm young cheek, soliciting his heart,
At early morn unseen: these and their like
I bid farewell, and strike a higher note.

CREATION.

BOOK III.

The Creation of Man—His Fall—Savage life—Its characteristics—The origin of Language—Of Society—Its vices—War—Ambition—False glory—Grandeur.

CREATION.

BOOK III.

Lo! man appears; last labour of the whole,
Form'd when the dying glory smote the earth,
With evanescent brightness, flick'ring, grand,
Straight swallowed up in nought; a symbol true
And sad of its imperfect work, of man,
Th' uncertain lord, for a brief cloudy day,
Of powers sublime but fleeting; fleeting good
Which ill employed leaves him a sordid clod,
Akin to senseless earth; yet, wisely used,

May lift him to the seraph's ranks of fire,
And glory everlasting. Not to me,
Erring and frail, beseems to tell the tale,
In holy writ recorded: weak, my voice,
And faltering, from sacred song forbears;
I humbly pass to when the race diffused
In savage woods abode, or 'mid wild plains
Or up on dreamy mountains wreathed with storms,
Naked, uncivilized, and uncorrupt;
Contending with the reptile and the beast,
Or the dark things of air, for life, repast,
And home and habitation and respect.

My lab'ring mind I turn then to the woods
Where live in idle independence stern,

The fathers of mankind; unarm'd and wild,
Allured alone by food or joys of sex,
And driv'n by pain or fear, or passions few,
From these sole sources borrowed; on they go,
Without an aim, throughout their trackless maze;
Creeping through twining boughs in eyeless wilds,
Their food, the feebler beasts, or the rough fruits
Or sapid berry, nut, or pulpy gourds,
Hanging, abundant, on the tangled shrubs.
Their common or their only cause of strife
The female savage shy, with native guile
Inferior force assisting; weak of nerve,
But strong in passive power intense;
Patient and subtle, selfish, vigilant,
Enduring pain, and toil, and want, and shame,

With all the treach'rous meekness of a slave,—
Because a slave;—by violence unjust,
Robbed of her nature's privilege, she seeks,
Fraudful, to cheat her tyrant of her rights,
By him usurp'd and held, but still in her,
Inborn, inalienable; if unclaimed,
Not unforgotten, but still sought by wile.

Of ruder man the toy in softer hours,
The drudge, the victim of his wants or rage;
Unhonour'd, unbelov'd, although desired,
She can nor love nor honour; both alike
In ign'rance follow an imperious law,
On all inhabitants of earth imposed,
And herd together, bound by common need;

But never to their empty hearts repair
Affections pure and blessed, ties of blood,
And gentle charities of kind unknown;
Virtue unsought, wisdom and peace unprized,
Their lives are purely physical or brute.
Pain feel they, and gross pleasures of the sense;
Few are their pleasures, brief their raging pain,
Full soon forgotten in undreaded death:
Combat and triumph know they; flight, repose,
Hunger and fulness, toil and lassitude;
The rest is all a void; or if there creep
Into their nighted bosoms, aught beside,
'Tis a glad consciousness of healthful life.

In the tree tops they nestle, safe from harm,
Of the strong beast nocturnal; though by day

Under his tooth they sometimes sink surprised,
When from his den they rouse him by their cries,
Or pass, incautious, through his leafy lair.
But not without a struggle they submit
To be his food or pastime; with great hearts,
Upon the danger, dangerous they turn,
And desp'rate grapple with their unsought harm.

Griped by the tawny lion, from his front
Majestic, with their crooked nails they tear,
The dazzling eyeballs, or their strong teeth fix
Upon some vulnerable part infirm,
And wrench it with excruciating pain;
Or, eager, from his torn and welling veins,
They drink hot vengeance ample, and repay,

Or death with death, or death with agony,
Blindness, or maim, or lingering disease.

The subtle serpent to the subtler man
Is less a danger than a loved repast;
Grasping a club he seeks the clotted leaves,
Or aged bush, or cloven tree or rock
In weedy verdure lost, and, with quick eye
And quicker arm, the hissing snake assails;
Maugre his active spring and venomed fang,
He pours a storm of blows upon him fast,
Then drags the bruised viper from his hole,
Strips off his painted, cold and horny rind,
And eats him, ravenous, yet half alive

And stern espial grave; with breath deep drawn
And nostrils broad distent, noiseless and slow,
They cautiously advance; each unto each,
An enemy redoubted, though unshunn'd.
No vantage either yields; the same in all;
Their giant limbs of equal strength possessed,
Their spacious bosoms rise in ample curve,
Their full hearts swell alike with copious ire,
Their hardihood untamed, however tried
By winter's long rude gusts of wind and rain,
Or swelt'ring summer noons of thirst and heat.

The combat long delayed, they meet at length
With yells that through the deep wood ring afar,
And gallow half its tribes: each brawny limb
Grapples its opposite, their legs entwine

And their rough arms embrace and strain,
With a convulsive, but a balanced strength:
Their sharp teeth they infix and grind and tear
The soft and tender flesh, and their long nails
Dig deep and fast into the bleeding side;
Till, all defence forgotten, in the strife
They miss the yielding boughs and from the tree,
Together locked, fall sheer upon the ground
With hideous brays of pain, surprise and rage,
Diff'rent their lot though matched their means of war;
The elder savage, injured, lies supine,
Unable to contend though striving still,
Vanquish'd by a chance hurt, his body yields,
And the hot blood fast guggles from his mouth,

While his high soul disdains his failing flesh;
But the young victor slowly from the sod
Rises in pain and staggers to his foe;
Then kneels upon his breast and grasps his throat,
Fell as despair, and hangs there long, 'till life
Has fled the ruin'd mansion. All is past,
And the long glades are silent once again,
As, from the struggle freed, he turns away,
Leaving the corse, remorseless, to the wolves,
Or birds of rapine: next he looks around
For her, the cause of battle and of death,
Nor long he seeks in vain; in the dark shade
Of shrowding thicket, cowering to earth,
With deep instinctive fear, he finds her soon,
And with rough blandishment and rude caress

Sooths her and pleases: she forgets the dead,
And with void heart, the victor joins content.

Away they hie together; their wild lives
Knit into one, and from their mem'ries fade
The evils of the past; the morrow's sun
Sees them inhabit other groves in peace,
And their chance-chosen home from that dread hour,
In some dry bower or quiet copse they fix,
And all their pains, toils, wants, disports, renew.

To other thickets piercing, now, I see
A num'rous brood of naked children wild;
Hungry and lean, hardy and fierce they rove,
In rude society; and to one home,

By habit led, they press, with savage cries,
The rudiments of language, though to them,
When heard or uttered, nought but common signs,
Ill understood, of stormy passions free,
By the same objects roused in all alike.

One cry unvarying of greedy joy
By frequent use and constancy of sound
Becomes a name of food or beverage
They covet and employ. A wail of pain,
A yell of rage, returning to the ear
In frequent cadence similar will name,
After long time, the things that pain or rage
Cause or suggest: in modulation fixed
They cling unto the mem'ry, they become

Part of its scanty stores, and, heard by chance,
Call up the thoughts to which they are enchained.

In slow accumulation, meagre use,
They pass from mouth to mouth by all received,
Because with unexamined aptness, power,
They strike the ear and echo to the heart,
Where lie the feelings that first gave them birth,
By motions acting on th' obedient nerve
In close, unconscious similarity.

Thus are the bases cast of early tongues
Unlike or uniform as oak to oak,
Or tree to sapling, or as flame to flame,
Which, all arising from resembling roots,

Of speech original inspired, a strange,
Vague notion vain, obscure, first gave the hint,
To those who seek beyond the powers of dust,
A flatt'ring scheme of lofty gifts conferred.
Nor such I blame, but hold not to their creed;
I leave them free, yet my own path I choose
Where greater light appears and less pretence.

From names of things a gross eduction made
Gives qualities diverse, in these inborn:
And, unto qualities, cleave and adhere
Action and passion marked by varying close
Or hinged by words auxiliary and fixed.

Language is formed: its farther march immense
Diffusion subsequent or difference

Rise or decay, 'tis not my task to note:
I mark that, acting as a common bond,
And unrefused, from loquent sire to son,
It draws men into families, to tribes
To hordes, to nations numerous and vast.
And with the rise of nations, rise the arts
Of simple races rude: arms and attire,
Demanded by their habits and their wants,
The first appear; then habitations plain;
Comforts allure them next, superfluous good,
And means of idleness; whence, num'rous, flow,
The labours of the mind and pleasures high
Of flattered passions and of tastes refined:
But with this good inseparably springs,
In evil union, ill equivalent.

With arms came war, came glory; evil name,
That sheds a halo round ten thousand crimes,
And dignifies the vice we should abhor!
Thus savage ire unholy, claims renown
As valour, as devotion to a cause;
Extensive robbery, as high emprize,
Detested cruelty, as feats of arms,
And cringing servitude, as loyalty.
Thus are we ever slaves of names, of dreams
Delusive all; nor will we yet awake;
But on, remorseless and deceived, we press,
To fancied good peculiar, o'er the ills,
Unheeded, of our fellow-fools; nor learn,
By the long lesson of so many years,
That good in evil never can be found.

With glory came ambition. Feller fiend
From hell arose not, when the yawning gulf
From its red night of compact fire, set loose,
Its evil crew, fallen to eternal pain
Unutterable, fallen from joy intense,
And fallen to rise no more; though still condemned
To struggle hard, albeit forbid to hope!

Busy ambition cursed the subject earth
With difference of wealth, of power, of right,
Of rank, of honour, folly of the wise!
Can dust ennoble dust? Or would the ant,
Though call'd a lion, cease to creep and hoard,
And be a petty insect, liable
To sink unheeded 'neath the passing foot

Of the dull thoughtless clown? A name is nought,
Though things from things may differ, men from men
Little, for they are little, and no sound
Can give or take their difference away.
A knave and fool will be a fool and knave,
Though with the longest, loftiest title mock'd
That slavish tongues can utter solemnly
And honest ears disdain. Of these no more,
At least until my song again upraised,
In easier hours may, with more ample stretch,
Tell more of vice and all her fond disguise.

To wid'ning habitations grandeur stole
And, gradual, call'd aloud for domes and towers,

And spacious homes secure, for insect small
That lives an April day in pompous pain,
In weakness, ign'rance, fear; nor can his walls
Or massy iron doors, bar out the hour
That makes him nought. Oh, Babylon!
Where are thy lords? The pilgrim meek and lone,
Shakes from his shoes and staff th' encumb'ring clay
That, once, sublime, sat in thy gaudy halls,
In high carouse and haughty state, severe,
Unconscious of the coming ill; and I,
That by the sad light of my wasting lamp,
Now sit and meditate, housed from the storm
And sheltered from the cold, ere long,
With them or with their like shall mix unshunn'd,
Nor heed the storm nor cold; nor fear, nor love,

Nor envy who lies next unfelt, unknown,
In equal mansion mean and mere disgrace,
Though now, unnoticed, pained, repining, lone,
My petty path, a fading line, I trace
Among my brother worms, that fondly doat
O'er fancied eminence absurd, derived
From titles granted or by popes or kings,
To crime, wealth, power; haply to virtue high,
Now lost for ever 'mid the deep'ning shades,
Of long gone dark-browed time, no more illumed
By these most poor inheritors of words
Not things: and yet, of splendid trifles vain,
They dare exalt the head, they dare despise,
The mightier titles ne'er inherited,
And rarely granted, priceless and unbought,

By the great King of Kings. Hath shame no brand
To burn the stony conscience of the fool
That glories in the walls he never built,
The land he never ploughed, nay, never saw,
The titles he has stained, the hoarded gold
His fathers pilfered, or the glitt'ring star
That to his bosom leads the eye of scorn?

RE TION.

B IV.

-A vision—The progress of Evil
ice—Luxury—War and its at-
mpanied by pomp and flattery—
—Exile—Famine—Pestilence—
d Fear, Fancy and Superstition—
phy and Religion come to assuage

CREATION.

BOOK IV.

The Poet vindicates his design—A vision—The progress of Evil on earth—Superfluity—Avarice—Luxury—War and its attendant horrors—Power accompanied by pomp and flattery—The spoiler Time—Oppression—Exile—Famine—Pestilence—The train closed by Hope and Fear, Fancy and Superstition—The vision changes—Philosophy and Religion come to assuage the World's sorrows.

CREATION.

BOOK IV.

PERCHANCE my honest speech too rough, too true,
To the weak ears by adulation soothed,
May seem intrusive, harsh, unmannerly,
And wound the tender sense pampered by praise,
By too long ease diseased; or wrench the heart,
Warped from its native line, its rectitude,
By unrelaxing strain of ancient pride;
Or pour strange darkness, new and terrible,

Into the charmed eyes that look around
O'er desolate domains and see, deceived,
Sunshine and smiles where sable horror frowns,
And hate and rage, and hunger and despair.
Yet none I seek to pain, and their wrong blame,
Unmerited and hurtless, I shake off:
Guilt I attack and guilt I dare defy,
Calm and secure, in my good arms of proof;
I seek no victim, but the general foe
Of me, of all men, and I would my words
Were arrows tipped with fire, and aimed so well
That they might find the very wound, the sore,
Deep, secret, rankling, and infecting wide,
That ulcerates the bosom of mankind,
And cauterize it to its latent root;

Or with fine point chirurgic cut away,
The envenomed and corrupting ill concealed.
No czar, no emperor, king, noble, priest,
Or Crœsus, puling o'er his childish dream
Of happiness transmuted into gold,
Or soldier bleeding from the laurelled field,
Or man or woman rises to my mind;
Nor at them aim I the loud whistling shafts,
Drawn from celestial quiver, that I hope
To send with stronger bow and with bared arm,
Some day, against infernal vice, that hides
Among them, in the shade they all afford,
Or weak or willingly, until her spells
Have turned them into base and brutish things,
Though ignorant or proud of their vile change.

This hydra well beloved, this fiend embraced,
Stands in opposing harm, and if my shot
Graze a protector or a passer by,
I heed not, hear not his unjust reproof,
That on a friend wreaks his misguided wrath.

But, hold! let me break off, for, o'er my mind,
Unbidden, dawns a mystic vision grand
That peoples twilight round with cloudy shapes,
Fast rolling forward, like the mountain mists
Swept from the breast of Appennine, at eve,
When the gale seeks the sea, and to the main
From the high lonely crags, thrusts hasty down
A tumbling throng of shifting vapours grey.
O'er steeps and chasms and verdant vales they roll,

And modest villages and chesnut woods
Rocks, castles, cottages, and holy fanes,
And busy towns and solitary wilds;
O'er bearded goats that climb with hardy foot
To crop rough flavoured myrtles, or, that pause,
And drop the plundered sprig, stripped of its leaves,
And gaze and bleat, amazed at set of sun;
Or shaven monk sedate, in vesper prayer,
Kneeling, unnoted, to recount his beads;
Or the brown troops of peasant lasses gay
And honest rustics, carolling aloud,
As to their hilly homes they upward hie,
Released from wholesome toil; or trav'ller sad
Stooping to kiss the coy and hasty rill,
Or gazing wide, with home in his full heart,

Over thy wreathed vines and olive slopes,
Oh! too fair Italy, most fair and most unwise,
Discordant with thyself, hapless, and lost,
Supreme of fallen nations. Like these mists
That hide all earth with airy shapes grotesque,
So the dim vision passing o'er my soul
Man and his labours veils, and, in their stead,
The evils that, with gradual steps, advanced,
In early ages, o'er the shrinking world,
The good and gracious powers that with them strove,
Take to themselves wild shapes, in strange array,
Marshal their mighty host and over life
Cast a rich peopled darkness, blotting out
The things of life; as from the landscape broad,
From Italy, fair emblem of fallen man.

The mist effaces convent, town and tower,
The gliding river and the sleeping lake,
The cliffs, the valleys, and the tufted woods
The slaty hills and the blue gleaming sea,
The monk, the peasants, and the stranger sad
With eye bedimmed as gentle thoughts of home,
Dear, but far distant, in his bosom rise.

Shoots from the airy depths of thought a train
Vagrant, fantastic, and swift warping down,
Like locusts on the harvest; at their head,
Captain supreme, the swoln and carnal chief
Hight Superfluity; his gouty limbs
Repose, unseemly, on a couch of down
Borne onward by lashed slaves, and in his hand

Foams a bright goblet, on his head a crown
Surmounted with tall plumes; behind him falls
A velvet mantle lined with costly furs,
And crusted with thick gold. Around him stand
A thousand useless menials, crouching low,
His enemies, their own, a band despised
As eating unearned bread, their food, their shame,
Wrung from the honest hands that till the ground,
To fatten lazy and disgraceful pomp.

Two ministers stand on the right and left,
Each followed, closely, by a sep'rate gang,
And serve their master with an equal zeal,
And equal share his confidence and love.
The one a meagre wretch with sunken eyes,

Fixed on full bags of gold from which he sees,
With pains beyond the damned, his fellow bold,
Selfish and proud voluptuous Luxury,
Ravish incessantly the yellow bane
To spend on fopperies that he abhors,
Or vices that he covets or disdains.
Yet with a fiercer joy beholds them crammed
By all his agents, crowding to the store,
Theft, Rapine, Gaming, Usury and Fraud,
And countless more, with the rich metal all
Deep-burdened, plunder'd or by guile or force,
From joyous slaves on easy bounty fed
That follow their great master's rival high,
Who throws profuse among them showers of gold,
In undiscriminating plenty rude;

Reward or hire of villany or toil,
Lewdness or riot, triumph or disgrace,
Dishonour, dissoluteness, falsehood, blood.

But, hark! a bray of trumpets shakes the air
And dancing banners flutter in the breeze:
Amid the blaze of guns, the cymbal's roar
Dark War advances dreadful; his right arm,
New-dipped in human blood; his falchion's glare
Harmful and, quick as thunder-light from heaven,
Burns horrible around: beside him walk
Blind Fame and feasted Death, whose skinny lips
Are puckered newly to a ghastly smile
As yelling thousands bite the dusty plain.
Huge conflagrations shed a baleful light

Upon his onward way, and, in his rear,
Fatherless millions shriek the bitter curse;
Hang on his sweating flanks, Famine, Disease,
Lust, Cruelty, and Tyranny, and Hate,
False honour, armed to vindicate the wrong,
And squalid penury, and mangled pain,
Slaughter, Injustice, Ruin and Dismay.

Swoops forward in a storm of ireful sound
Like levin struggling on the wracking wind,
The broad battalia fell, and to the skies,
In choral fury evil anthems raise.

They pass; they disappear; Power comes behind
By Pomp escorted: acclamations loud,

Tire the sick ear, and incense burns around,
By Flattery supplied, a sorceress fair
Who, like the bee that for his profit sucks
Honey from e'en the basest flower that blows,
Deftly from ev'ry action good or bad,
Wise, foolish, petty, great or mean or grand,
Sweeter than Hybla's most mellifluous stores
Grateful applause pernicious ever sucks.
Comes Ostentation next, in stupid state
And childish majesty, haughty and grave,
List'ning with ign'rant ear, but face severe
To Genius, Wisdom, Truth; nor wakes his heart,
Save at the silver voice, the golden words,
The perfume floating wide, the blazon high
Of Flattery, who tells aloud and oft,

His nameless deeds sublime: then on he stalks,
With awful step sedate, through noble halls,
Pictured with lying tales of fabled feats
By his great fathers done, 'tis said, of yore,
Which proudly he narrates, at seasons fit,
And glories in their worth and then forgets.
Lives out his life of gorgeous uselessness
And claiming in the dust prerogative
In some old temple solemn sleeps apart,
By none regretted, nay, by all despised,
Until forgotten, for he soon is nought
Not e'en a name. There passes o'er the earth,
Incessantly and incorruptible,
An aged judge, his earthly title Time.
There is no thing so powerful, so wise,

So just, so awful as this giant sire,
That swallows all his children, save some few,
From whom, though grudgingly, he yet abstains.

From the world's chronicles he razes fast
The airy titles, flatteries fond and false,
Of the great little that scarce live a year—
A month—an hour—in gen'ral memory:
Nor these alone he rules; life's business all,
To us a work of merit and of mark,
Is a proud pageant, is a passing shew,
Rehearsed, to do him honour, by his thralls:
Tyrants and captives pass, kings, captains, slaves,
And swell the stores of darkness at his nod:
He walks the desert and, anon, arise

Column and arch, tower, palace, spire and dome,
Fortress and prison, bridge and battlement,
And thousands throng them with the voice of life:
He strikes the sea, back reel the vanquished waves,
And, soon, the plough drives over buried sands,
Where hunted whales retired to hide their young:
He breathes upon the battle field where lie,
In unexpected peace, the broken hosts,
And, at his breath, obedient, spring sweet flowers,
Tall vines or bearded corn or yellow hay,
Or waving woods and all the toils of Death
Hide with gay Plenty's vegetable robe.

But oft, with aim oppos'd, he climbs the rock
And pulls the massive castle from its crown;

Or tramples into dust the temples proud,
Or thrones or tombs of kings: he speaks and, lo!
The royal sceptre quits the strongest hand,
Fall from the weakest limbs the heaviest chains,
And names that millions blabbed from land to land
Are heard no more for ever: or he calls
And, onward, at his voice, swoln ocean rolls
And nets are cast, or warlike navies ride
O'er sunken cities in whose silent streets
The finny dolphin gambols. Clouds before,
And darkness cast behind him, on he goes
Rounding the earth, and all its living tribes
The whims of Fortune, and the tricks of Chance.
The toils of Art or Nature and the flow
Of all events governs by his sole will,
Subject alone to Him whom all obey.

Near Power, Oppression stalks, with careful face,
Cold heart, and iron eye, and grasping hand;
Wresting from wasted Hunger his small loaf,
From Poverty his insufficient coin,
From Age his comforts and his petty hoard,
And from Disease his bed, his home, his help,
His ev'ry hope of short relief or cure.

Around him swarm a thousand sturdy slaves,
Blazing in arms, or black with legal robes;
And, now, with open violence avowed,
Now by close craft, that, to the hasty eye,
Seems social right, alike they work his will.

Circassian virgins torn from bowers of peace
Are closed in harems, or are sold in marts;

The simple shepherd from Arabian vales,
The Abyssinian from the founts of Nile,
The woolly African from torrid sands,
Fettered and maimed and dragged to haunts of trade,
Bartered for gold, become a merchandize.

How many bleed upon the battle plain,
Forced from their peaceful homes of toil-bought ease
To die in quarrels of their unknown lords,
And guiltless taste th' effects of cause unjust!
How many welter in the dreadful main,
Wrung from th' embrace of mother, children, wife,
From honest labour torn and thoughts humane,
To sin and suffer on deep waters broad
And fill the tombs of ocean! O'er the earth,

Heart-broken, wander, driv'n from social joys,
Country and comfort, honours and repose,
Shame-branded exiles madd'ning in their woe;
Exiled for crimes they know not, or for fault
Of fortune, or of men, of times, or things:
Or by the sceptre struck, or by the sword,
Or by the doom of law iniquitous.

Himself a despot by a despot driv'n
From halls of old renown and splendid ease
Where late he lived, wealth-cankered, I behold,
A beggared noble with a hunter's gear,
Roam over desart wilds in search of game:
Gall in his mouth and poison in his heart,
And humbled pride or phrenzy in his eye.

In a mean hovel, by a frozen fen,
His daughter lives in poverty and woe,
The voluntary victim of his lot,
Born to far other duties, higher hopes,
Her small hands now prepare their scanty meal,
Or trim the hearth or clean the rusty gun,
And do a peasant's lowly labour mean:
Then walks she forth, ill-clad in undressed skins,
And seeks, amid the snow, a petty mound,
Under whose swell sleeps, cold and quietly,
Her unforgotten mother, ever dear,
Soundly as though she slept in costly urn,
Or sepulchre of state, where vanity
In marble tells her trite and fulsome lies;
There, under bitter skies, she kneels and prays,

Sighs oft and sheds, heart-wounded, virtuous tears,
Alas! that cannot fertilize the grave.
This done she homeward wends and by the blaze,
Attends the coming of her time-changed sire,
From fortune's topmost pinnacle thus fallen,
Struck down by arm unjust, to rise no more.

Again, I gaze on sunny lands where stray
Green vines in long festoons, deep loaden all,
With purple grapes or golden, holding fast
By many clasping tendrils, close enringed,
And ponderous with the gay juice within,
Like rev'llers from the banquet, overfilled;
Or aged olives, rich with clustering fruit,
And twinkling gladly through their small, pale leaves,

Or meadows moving all with horned herds
Or forests old where loudly strikes and long
The woodman's axe or crash of falling tree;
Or, heard remote, the melancholy horn
Of lonely goatherd sounds, or shrilling pipe
And tuneless drone, wherewith he, patient, charms
The noontide hour; and oft he hears, well pleased,
Afar, from hollow glades or distant rocks,
His sylvan melody re-echo round.
Yet there, on all that wide and bounteous land,
Bounteous, alas! in vain, the peasant bends
In hopeless toil, with scanty raiment robed,
His cheek the home of hunger, and his stare,
Stupid and wild, telling a hideous tale
Of pain and want endured, and rage concealed,

Ferocious degradation, thoughts of fire
That burn not warm the bosom and the brain.
Beside him stands the master of the soil,
Not happier than the abject thing he rules,
Nay, more unhappy; in his inmost heart
Dried are the founts of joy, of wholesome joy,
And a pernicious gulf discloses wide
Its baleful depths, where should arise and gush
Human affections and the tides of peace
And blessedness of fond benevolence.
Disdainful his attire, with haughty gait,
He comes and glances indolently round;
And coldly eyes the limpid floods of oil,
That, from the groaning presses, unctuous rush;
Or hasty streams that flow from heaped grapes,

Bleeding apace beneath the heavy feet
Of trampling hinds; or heaps of yellow silk;
Or his stuffed granaries of hoarded corn;
Or his fat pastures and his countless flocks;
Yet on his wrinkled brow no radiance dawns
Reflected from his wealth; his heart is chill,
As in the quarry is the unsunned rock;
Within his recreant memory lags a fear,
A fixed spot upon the mental eye,
Of some high tyrant, stronger than himself,
Whose vengeful arm far reaching o'er him holds,
Suspended by a single hair, a sword
Whose point distilleth venom, and whose edge,
He may soon feel and rue, should sport or rage,
Suspicion, slander, hatred, or caprice,

Relax the grasp that holds in dread delay
The blind, remorseless minister of fate.

From these I pass to follow o'er the brine
A timid colony, reluctant, sad.
From their lost homes retiring in despair,
Last courage of th' oppress'd; and, from their land,
So long beloved in vain, for ever fled,
To woody wilds or rich but voiceless shores
Where Nature, unconstrained, labours alone
And pours forth rank fertility unseen,
Enriching earth in vain, or lavishing,
With hands profuse and tireless, on the beast,
Unthankful, unadmiring, her great store.
Thither they wend and see, in cold amaze,

Productions new, and beautiful, and life,
Inhabiting strange forms unknown, unprized;
And, overhead, they eye a stellar cope,
Bright and magnificent, all overwrit
With wondrous characters unread before.
Released from the green desert broad they land
And reverently kiss the chosen ground,
And hail the pleasant places and fat plains,
Which none usurp from them with heartless power
That owns no pain it feels not, and feels none
In its hard selfish breast companionless,
That wealth can put aside or force disarm.

Here soon they build their huts of mud and thatch,
House their few rustic stores, name their poor homes,

And, next, with spades, the foreign soil they turn
And, trembling, to its bosom moist commit
The half of all their hopes : the woodlands, then,
And far savannah winding they explore,
Bewildered in interminable depth,
And long unable to approach and know
Its many, nameless, shy inhabitants :
Or, after their few toils of innocence,
With wife and children shared, that brace the nerve,
Soften the heart and rectify the mind,
They saunter, calmly, through the shade serene
Of their own bowers or fields, blessing and bless'd,
And ever-bounteous and indulgent Heaven
Humbly address with glad thanksgiving due :
Or, in their hovels, by their ev'ning fire,

Ply the mechanic tool and rudely shape
The household goods necessity demands;
Or quenched the blaze, when silence broods around
And day-light fadeth from the twinkling sky,
What time the sober moon her silver car,
In sad and solitary majesty,
Drives onward through the desert fields of air,
Or, secret, wheels behind bright-listed clouds,
Lending them colours that outvie the mine,
The flower, the iris, or the eye of health
Or beauty's shining tress or blushing cheek,
In their heaped rushes warm, they taste repose,
Untroubled by the thought of robber's knife
Or midnight cry to arms, or morning-call
Of greedy creditor, or feeble prayer

Of dying hunger on the threshold lain,
Through whose scant rags the bitter season stings

And here, perhaps, in solitude concealed,
Unthwarted by the social current strong,
They feel the chain of being linking all
To the great Entity immense, and own
The necessary laws that waste repair,
And keep progression up. Thus musing long
To altitude of intellect they rise,
Knowledge of good and evil, love of peace,
And zeal of virtue and fair hope of grace,
And true contentment of brave souls resigned.

Again the vision moves, the phase is changed;
Dark on the air a low'ring spectre flies,

Mighty, portentous, and her hateful breath
Blasts the young corn and kills the tender fruits,
Infects the herds and poisons the deep wave.
Famine her name abhorred! she lights on earth,
By diff'rent calls allured; man's error oft,
Nature's defect, sometimes, attracts the fiend;
She rushes down, as lightning lent her wings,
Destroys a starving hamlet, or a tribe
On some poor mountain, in unfruitful vale
By lonely lakes in ancient copses hid,
Or lacking or long drained of needful stores:
Thence to a teeming city she repairs,
And crushes pining thousands; next diffused
In amplest horror she unfolds her power
Over disastered nations; millions sink

And millions follow, and th' unburied dead
Taint the broad air; until her fatal sway,
Is ended, and, aloft, she cleaves the clouds,
When earth, remorseful, plumps again the grain,
And takes her fated way through the blue vault,
To other climes that need her chastisement.

Follows her sister Pestilence, anon,
With gait irregular and aspect foul,
And broad wings dropping fast unseemly death,
And crimes unknown to reason, foolish, dark,
Disgusting, strange, unhallowed and accursed.
Woman forgets her shame and man his pride,
Virtue and valour sink, honour and hope,
In one abyss of utter wretchedness

Common to all, to each peculiar
Or seeming so. The rev'ller wild, insane
Consorts with Death his neighbour at the feast,
And eats and drinks and sins, blasphemes and dies.
The virgin laughs to air the fears of yore,
And, in immodest misery, sits down
And lips disease beside her; e'en as 'twere
To wanton in the grave; the aged nurse
Dozes beside the dying, or but wakes
To force the ling'ring sufferer to expire;
Or eye the gold she pilfered from the clothes
Rank with infection, sinning but to die:
The barefoot friar and priest in holy stole,
With burning tapers, light unto the dust,
With pious offices, the vampire dead

That pluck them thither by conjoined effect:
Or boldly come with comfort to the sick,
That fill the couch themselves shall after press:
The learned leech, with zeal sublime, explores,
The noisome and infected cells where steams
Blue mortal venom, and where howls despair:
Nor thirst of gold, nor hunger of applause
Directs his saving steps, but pity pure,
That first, sweet sympathy kind bosoms own,
Last virtue that with ill supreme can dwell.

Thus ends the mighty march of pain and crime,
Closed by twin forms unwillingly embraced,
Inextricably, by the fiat high
Of the great solitary sire of all.

These diff'rent shapes, these natures so averse,
Abhorrent bound in mortal struggle fell,
Hold a broad middle space between the crew
Of hell gone by, and a grave, comely band
Fair trooping o'er the plain, fresh blooming fast,
Under their blessed feet. One hostile pair,
For ever bound in contest and in hate,
By potent charm indissoluble, now
My verse should full portray; but not the wave
Fast rolling on the main, nor driving cloud
Mounted upon the blast, nor rising flame
Blown from the throat of Etna, half so soon,
Or often, varies form and size and hue,
And mocks the eye with change inscrutable.
Fair is the one and smiling like a child,

With trifles happy and with promise pleased.
Her voice is sweet as twilight nightingale's,
When winds are hushed and forest walks are still:
Her gaze is bold, and on the future fixed,
But heedless of the present and the past;
She presses forward, careless of repulse,
Nor disappointment dreads nor masked deceit:
Her cheek's deep tinge is like the sanguine cloud
Rolled round the ear of Morning in the south:
Her young eyes swim in joy, like happy maid's
To whom first love is teacher; her strong limbs,
Like a new baited eagle's, cleave the wind,
Rapid and tireless; on each golden plume,
Shot with deep purple and bedropped with fire,
Is written clear, in white and living light,
Her name, an old immortal spell,—'tis "Hope."

Attracted to her side a phantom flies,
Sable and threat'ning, shedding frequent tears
And screaming as in pain; she often starts
From harmless beast or insect, in alarm
At ills imaginary; oft turns pale
At her own vain and secret thoughts of harm:
Her hair is grey in youth, palsied her head;
Her weak knees knock apace, her lean hands shake,
And triple ague freezes in her blood.
No passion knows she, but a loathing wild,
Repaid with burning scorn, of her compeer
Gay, bright and daring; yet, together leashed,
They travel on insep'rable. Her wings,
Dark as fixed blindness, roughly brush the gale,
With sudden strokes abrupt and contrary;

Bursts from her mouth a cloud that fills the air
With darkness terrible, and her pale lips,
Bloodless and quivering, to the welkin shout,
In harsh and constant shrieks, the name of "Fear."

To virtue and to vice, indifferent,
Both lend their frequent aid, called or uncalled,
Although the first to honour most inclines;
To sorrow, evil, and to shame the last.

Behind them, close, two sister sprites advance,
Fancy and Superstition: fair, though wild,
The one;—the other dire and strange and base,
With a saint's visage and a serpent's tail,
Complex abomination! loquent, grave,

She fills the ear with lies, the heart with rage,
The breast with heavy groans, the eye with tears,
The temple with a mummery absurd;
But those same hands that should be raised in pray'r,
In penitence, in peace, in help, in love,
She plunges in pure blood, or arms with steel,
Or fire, or scourges, and in fury sends
To deal her wrath around. Her gentler mate,
To gems converteth tears, or loads a sigh
With scents of Araby, or paints the cheek
Like roses, clothes the eye with wounding light,
Endows the brook with health, the cup with joy,
The bosom with desire; touches the mind,
With vigorous and young enchantment gay;
Peoples the groves and rivers, founts and seas,

Rocks, grots and mountains, nay, the heights of air,
With living things awful or beautiful:
To groves of Pindus leads the muses grave,
And crowds Olympus with a rout of gods;
Then wakes her harp amid the circling spheres,
In harmony entrancing and eterne;
Or borne on soundless wings of angels high,
She wanders forth, from star to glimmering star,
Through wilds of space and seas of endless day,
Straying throughout creations all her own.

Came next Philosophy, an aged seer
Whose solemn voice spake knowledge, and whose eye
Long fixed on Nature pierced her many veils,
Saw all her latent and recondite charms,

And read her sacred will ineffable,
In mystic legend, written on a scroll,
Rarely and briefly shown to mortal eyes,
That drowsy are and apt to read amiss.
Some scattered precepts of the learned law
By wisdom treasured, as by patience found,
Make the world's riches, and the precious good
Is given, in trust, to the sage father calm,
Recorded slightly in this wand'ring lay.

Around him troop attentive and sedate
Unnumbered sons of science, art, and trade,
And lisp his wondrous lessons, and receive
Help from his aged lips and guiding hands;
But both he moves in vain for ears of clay,

And hearts of frozen stone, and bosoms barred,
And eyes fast sealed in wilful ignorance.

His task is done; he passes slowly on
By old Experience supported, led,
And follows men and things with cautious eye
Ever on good intent, and seeking truth,
Virtue invincible and happiness;
Where'er these sisters coy may fix their seat.

Last of the train, a radiant shape was seen
That, dove-like, hovered with expanded wings,
From heaven descended and, still, glancing back
To her own grand abode;—yet, earthward, slow,
Her tardy flight was bound. She lighted now,

And sacred peace from far diffused around,
And meekness, humbleness and piety;
Then men embraced as brothers, and all heaven
Shed balm upon the earth, and, under foot,
Sprang flowers of paradise, and, arching high,
Green, pleasant bowers of true and holy rest,
Arose in verdant honour: in the midst
The glorious figure stood, and oped a book,
Time-tried and mighty, and, persuasive, read,
With firm voice heard afar, in sound divine,
The will of nature's Author and the end
Of human duties, labours and desires.

Above her head a beaming halo played,
And, in th' incumbent air, was, distant seen,

Faintly, 'mid ambient flames, an ancient cross,
Round which full many kneeling nations prayed,
Mercy and charity and love were there,
Forgiving, helping, blessing all by turns,
Light'ning all burdens, binding up all wounds,
And kissing off, from eyes that look'd to heaven,
Bright but not bitter tears, that flowed like rain
In sweet repentance joyful and sincere.

CREATION.

BOOK V.

The subject resumed—The Tale of the Hunters.

CREATION.

BOOK V.

Fled is the vision and the world returns
Rising, yet youthful, from the mists of time;
And buried ages, spectral, to my soul,
Reveal their hoarded secrets, wrested all
From cold Oblivion's ever wid'ning tomb,
Destined to hold our race when rolling years
Have told the tale of each. Meanwhile I view
The forms of things gone by that lie, congealed,

In motionless forgetfulness and peace,
Unconscious of communion: thither, soon,
To share their comfortless repose I go;
But, in that home of night and nothingness,
Would still keep hold on earth and, from the tomb,
Speak with the unborn sons of men, and tell,
From out the tongueless grave, to distant life,
The feelings and the thoughts that moved and strove
Erstwhile within my crowded heart and brain.
Therefore these lines I trace, and from the stores
That to my hand are opened, I resume
For other's use a story of the past,
Of which no babbling echo yet hath touched
A living ear: when that is done, I pause
To catch the accents of the world's great voice,

Ere others from their dusty glooms I draw,
To fill with marvel and with matter new,
The tome on which my name obscure I write.

From the sea's base, aspiring to the clouds,
With a thick, bosky girdle belted round,
Climbs a brown mountain; and, upon his top
Eternal sits a huge, a glistering crown
Of cold white snow, that, smote by summer heat,
Weeps brooks and streamlets; and these, young and gay,
Gamesome and quick, glancing to rock and sky,
Leap from the crags in garrulous disport,
Or dance adown the slopes in mazy lines,
Or coyly haunt the maiden shade severe

Of untrod forests; where, by Naiads led,
They meet and marry, hid from eye profane:
Then, lost in offspring more robust, they wind,
With steadier steps, athwart long glades and seek
The rushing stream that, down the stony pile
Saws out his path, with uncompounding strength,
Towards the green tides of ocean, which, afar,
Call to their mighty brother of the hills.
Fast onward, at the call, he, boist'rous, rolls,
Bounds from the cliff in thunder, and, in rain,
Hurled upward, half regains his native skies;
Then, through a glen, with loud impatient growl,
Plunges to murky caves, shakes his rough mane
Long and dishevelled of far whitening foam,
Holds converse with the echoes, and relates

His combats huge, his valiance and power;
'Till, broad emerging, all his labours o'er,
He gains the plain submissive, and displays
His ample state majestical and slow,
Tranquil when unopposed; and to the sea
Carries the wealthy tribute of the land.

Hard by the sedgy sands, from grassy meads
Or tufted forest dark, or hollow caves
Full many a tribe repairs, guided by need,
And, kneeling on the rushy brink, or prone,
Drink the cold wave abundant, and rejoice
That bounteous nature to their thirsty lips
Offers a cup so large, and ever filled
With an uncloying bev'rage, healthful, sweet,
And rushing up, exhaustless to the brim.

Soon congregated here a nation young,
In different hordes divided, line the banks;
Or on the plain where tranquil waters flow,
Or in the secret woods by wand'ring streams,
Or higher still, 'mid rocks and frozen snows,
By frolic brooks, puny and gay and bright,
Of little mark or worth, but wild, but free,
Though cold and gaudy as their parents twain,
The flaunting summer and the heaped ice;
Though void at once of flavour and of life
Yet helpful, needful, to the hunters wild,
Who from them, grateful, take the frugal draught,
When tired and heated, from the toilsome chase
They homeward plod spoil-loaden, and, forespent,
Sit and refresh them with the potion plain,

By nature temper'd to their simple wants.
Their huts stand near, rude but beloved homes,
Poor but sufficient; none among them know
The wants of other life than this; avowed
By pride alone, and, by soft luxury
Voluptuous, satisfied, adorned or soothed.

To them, the happy children of the hills,
A couch of down is the warm bosom pure,
Of their loved partners; gold and gems of price,
Roses and odours and loud sounds of strings,
Or pipes mellifluous mixed in chorus high,
And shooting through the soul a trembling joy,
The poetry of sense, sweet and sublime,
Harmonious extacy; they find them all,

A tribute from the tribes of either tide.
With arrows they attack aquatic birds,
With spears and nets they search the waters clear,
And tithe the finny people roving there.
Nor is the distant forest never sought;
But when the giant sea, lashed by the winds,
Awakes to wrath, to madness, they retire,
And leave the dangerous savage; far on shore
They haul their barks, hang up their nets at home,
Then seize their quivers and invade the swamp,
Explore the dingle or ascend the hills,
And war upon the tenants of the shades.

A cottage stood within the rustling wood,
Half lost amid sear leaves; the poor abode

Of a fate-stricken hunter, on whose head
Fortune had early poured her wrathful vial:
His children to the tomb in youth had sunk,
His long loved wife at last had left him too,
And of his num'rous race but one remained,
A virgin daughter, young and wise and good,
To grow into his griev'd and aged heart,
Of ev'ry other gladness quite bereft:
For, though his limbs were still with vigour fill'd,
Yet useless was the gift, for, in his eyes,
Formless, eternal night had nature shed
Ere yet the half of life was fled, ere yet
The slackening sinew claimed that long repose,
That leadeth to the grave; the world's large face
For him was always veiled; the lights of heaven

Were all for ever quenched; a rayless sun
Warmed him at noon, and all creation wide,
Shrank into sound inept and touch obscure.
But on his daughter was still more bestowed
Than was from him withdrawn: beauty supreme,
Such as had shamed the ancient boast impure
Of Egypt or of Greece, was hers, unworn
By bondage, toil, or fear; she knew no vice,
Therefore she knew no shame; no inward dread
Of ill opinion, blame, or punishment,
Shook her fixed heart or blenched her naked soul.
The pleasant venom of voluptuous joy
She ne'er had tasted, never had desired;
Her beauteous spirit to her beauteous clay
Lent priceless lustre, such as liveth not

In orient gem or gold, in pearl or stone,
In Tyrian die or wool of far Cashmeer,
Or shining labours of the Persian worm.
Her peerless form, not yet at full disclosed,
For years lay lightly on her, was a pledge
Of near perfection, human shape before
Was ne'er so highly graced, if we except
The sinless mother of mankind, when first
She lived within the blessed bowers of old,
In innocence and joy; reflected now,
Sinless again and matchless, she revived
In this her distant daughter. In her eye,
Blue as mid-heaven, and lightsome as the morn,
There lay a majesty of peace, so pure
'Twas fearful to behold; and, as the spheres,

In liquid ease, turned round to other orbs
Of feebler beam, they shot out rays of heaven,
Thick flashing and victorious; though their power,
Subduing, thrilling, was nor prized nor known
By her who held it: her long locks of gold,
With decent care, washed in the running stream,
Then given to the wind, were like the hair,
Of crisped radiance, that the waking sun
Picts on in eastern seas. On her clear skin
The kiss of lavish summer had impressed
A tint more lovely than the marble white
That cautious cheeks, inconstant, lose or win,
As health and care, alternate, come or go.
Her form, her face were perfect; or, if aught
Had nature erred, 'twas in a gentle swell,

A fulness, roundness, left by lingering youth
That his fair habitation would not quit.
Upon her envied cheek the eastern rose
Had died and left, in air, a fragrant sigh
That floated ever round her, gentle, soft,
As thought of coming good; yet constant, pure,
As ancient memory of virtues past:
And in her heavenly eyes, upturned in prayer,
Trembled in light, a hasty dew of tears,
That scarce were sorrow's children; from the lids,
Closing in pious humbleness and hope,
Twin diamonds fell unheeded, and the earth,
In her fond bosom hid them evermore.
Her small teeth, slightly parted, were strung pearls,
And, 'tween the rows, was, rarely, seen to play

A living coral that therein abode,
Shy as a hermit, lonely, sanctified.
Her mouth, a double cherry, never oped,
But out there flew a breath of flowers or words
So humble and so slow, they seemed t' escape
From such sweet prison, half unwillingly:
Nor ever had they comrades numerous,
Or loud or boisterous, but grave and wise.
From gen'rous sires descended, brave and free,
She walked the wood unawed and harming none;
But with her firm right hand, her heritage,
She took, unhesitating, from the earth,
Nor blushed to take her own. Her father's arms,
Useless to him, she to the forest bore,
And from the furry tribes exacted food,

Defence against the elements, attire,
And what was needed else, that they could yield,
For her and for her sire; nor cared refuse,
With coyness hypocritical, the gift,
Heart-offered, by the simple hunters round;
Or of the dangerous bear, that to assail,
With her frail means she haply might not risk;
Or of the weighty stag, that to her home
Unaided she could never hope to drag;
Or of the sav'ry fish from distant stream,
To which she might not wander; or the bird,
Her shaft had missed, another's had brought down,
From the high paths of air: such boons as these
Laid at her cottage door, in dusky eve,
Before her late return, she took, nor saw,

Nor knew, what eyes were watching joyfully,
What friendly forms, perched in the leafy tree,
Or couched at distance 'mid the tall green grass
Had brought these off'rings; part in rev'rence due
To beauty and affliction; partly, too,
By good deeds, hid from note, in honesty,
In gratitude, to thank the gracious gods
For all the good they gave, the ill withheld.
Such things she took, nor seemed surprised nor sighed
To be a debtor, for this light amount,
To those who, had their lots been contrary,
Had owed to her an equal benefit.
Yet were there two from whom she had not ta'en,
With heart at ease, the tithe of half these gifts,
Though proffered with a hundred times the zeal,

Had she the donors known; and yet, were they
The triumph of their age, the glory, strength
And pride of honest races rude: the one,
A fisher, lived upon the level shore
And from the turbulent and murmuring sea
Wrested reluctant largess; on the hill
Abode the other; in the wood at morn,
His voice awoke the birds or sleeping beast;
His arm shot the first arrow that the ray
Of morning watched and lighted to its mark.
Upon these three, thrice happy, fell the boons
Of nature all, youth, goodness, beauty, health,
Open, kind hearts and bosoms clear and bold;
And growing minds in bodies vigorous.

How very lovely, art thou, in the young,
Oh, life! ere they know wasting pain that wrings,
With agony remediless, the nerves;
Or shame that fires the brain, or the world's wrong
That crushes like a rock, or guilty hopes
That covet other's pain, or o'erwrought toil
That crouches down in torpor and despair,
Or stupid crime that mocks at worlds to come,
Or the wild hell of triple-fanged remorse,
That trembles inly with fantastic dread
It dares not face or question; in the young
Life is a good, and only in the young
Whose organs play with ease, whose warm veins
throb
With tides of simple gladness, whose light breasts

Lodge happy inmates yet, nor fear old Time
With all his growing pack of hopes deceived,
And toils unrecompensed and faith betrayed;
Of honours due refused, virtues belied,
And scorn unmerited endured; of want,
Of deep affections, rooted in the core
Of their frail beings, blasted by the breath
Of fools pestiferous; of the fond ties,
Twined round the heart by nature, virtue, love,
Threatened by death, all merciless, or rent,
Tearing the bosom's finest chords withal
That heal no more; no, never! these, unknown,
Leave to the young, free minds ungall'd by care,
And bodies sound that scarcely are perceived,
Not felt as eating shackles of the soul,

And the full peace of ignorance, the joy
Of many hopes in flower, the kindly warmth
Of love on all diffused: from them the sword
Far flaming, is withheld, and they enjoy,
In innocence, the paradise of earth.
They ask not of the sky unequal good,
But share its manna with their fellows round,
And wonder at the bounty of high heaven.

They throng the world in beauty, freedom, love,
And the glad season given them they greet,
As glad as it, for the brief space allowed;
'Till time tears off the mask that hid all ill,
'Till pain and wisdom hurry to their side
And hope and beauty flee. Oh! for a charm,

To bind for ever fast, the am'ranth wreath
Young life puts on, and lift from age's scalp,
Bleeding and wrung, th' eternal crown of thorns.
It may not be; the lot is cast and drawn,
Nor can be put aside, save by the arm
That could roll round, with ease, the flaming sun
Backward, astonished, on his axis firm.

Come we again to our neglected tale
Of the two hunters and the forest nymph:
The greenwood wonder, and the honest pride
Of men original whose noble hearts
Durst own a thing superior to themselves;
Nor shrank at consciousness that pains the base,
But which the good and brave love and avow.

These twain with equal honour, valour, filled,
Had met in early life, and from that hour,
Their souls had grown together, knit to one:
Each was to each another self, more like
Than brother unto brother, and more dear
Than child to doating mother. Ne'er apart,
Or in the wood or on the wave they lived,
Linked by strong friendship, and fair equal thoughts,
Hopes, wishes, in their mutual minds arose,
In time and nature like, nor, to be known,
Needed be told, but still were ever told
That, both approving, either might rejoice.

And happy lived they till one fatal hour
They saw the maiden huntress of the wood;

Saw once, to see for ever; from their eyes
Her image would not flee, nor day nor night,
Nor other fair, nor danger nor repose,
Could e'er efface one line, injure one hue
Of the dread picture dear, august, divine,
By fancy hid among the inmost stores
Of avaricious memory: nor they,
Unseen by her, passed on their woodland way,
But equal lived within her gentle mind,
Incensed by pure affections, then first known,
Nor dreaded, although dangerous: her path
Now often led her, though no chace was there,
To the dark forest glade, where, first, their forms,
Half startled, she espied; and, on the brink
Of silent waters clear, she frequent sat,

Unwearied, to repose; as though she thought
Some one expected her, or, should expect,
If kind, if unforgetful; and she wept,
She knew not why, some bright; but needless tears,
Into the idle rill that lapsed along,
With sluggish motion and indifference.
And as her cottage to her fancy rose
Beheld she inmates there that, ne'er before
Had trod its lonely hearth, or thither brought
The treasures of the forest or the stream,
Rare and unsought, but welcome; now she saw,
Frequent, the tusked boar dragged from his haunt,
Or from the tide the snow-white swan, and joyed,
Her father's helpless age had found such friends,
Herself such brothers dearer than herself:

But soon she recollected 'twas a dream,
A bright a fond delusion; then she sighed
And, only half surprised, two answering sighs
Heard faint and stifled in the neighbouring shade.

She rose and glanced, unwilling, towards the spot
Whence such sweet sounds found way, and saw, too well,
What in her mind were shadows vain, there, true,
There, fixed in quiet gaze and equal pain,
In timid hope and fear and cloudy doubt,
The youthful hunters twain; and, straight, they meet,
Each unto each, in modest parle and grave,
With courteous salutation, slow draw nigh,
Then tell the forest news, forget the chace,

And gaze whole hours away, incautious all,
Nor noting that their secret, cureless wound,
But deepened in these hours of transient ease.

" 'Tis day, and see how fast the orient gold
" Enricheth Heaven; how morning's hallowed kiss
" Hath painted Earth with bashful blushes fair!
" And, hark! the merry woodlands ring around,
" And from its farthest shades the forest brays
" With all the stormy sounds of rousing life.
" Up, up! the dew is on the freshened grass
" And the scent lies: come on! the antlered stag,
" Or bristly boar, long on our acorns fed,
" Must yield his subject flesh to grace our board
" Ere the ox drinks or in the valley ploughs.

" Quick, quick! untie the dogs and take thy spear:
" I will away to where the river raves
" Adown the iron rocks that chafe his pride
" And ruffle his moist hair: for there perchance,
" My nets may hold some natives of the place,
" That ask my timely care. Bring my long bow
" And the grey shafts that lie beside the hearth.
" The vulture of the rock or the wild goose,
" Or quarrying eagle or the butting goat,
" On his tall cliff secure, to-day may feel
" The well ground points and pay their tardy dues."

Thus speaks the fisher as at early hour
Without the threshhold of the moss-grown hut,
Where he had shared repose with his co-mate,

He stands, half musing and half occupied
With necessary cares of humble life.
Then fast he strides away, in careless haste,
And thought not of defence, till, in the wild,
From succour far, he, half amazed, espies,
From wonted haunts remote, a lank bitch-wolf
That in quick rage from her drained dugs shakes off
Her snarling whelps and leaps from her foul lair,
T'appease her endless hunger, slake her thirst,
With human flesh and blood. Cruel she comes
As famished hell, and rapid as the bolt,
From cross-bow sped; her dark lips shrink apart
And scarce a growl precedes her scaring bound,
Yet balked she lights: evanish'd from the spot
The hardy fisher fled through brake and briar

And twining grass, grey coppice and long glade,
Prudent not fearful, seeking to avoid
Unequal war; yet, calmly, in his heart,
Muster the streams of life and copious send
Courage and hope through ev'ry well strung nerve.
And oft he tries to sliver off some branch,
Weighty and wieldy sapling tough uptear
Or pointed stone discover wherewithal
To make his battle good: when in a root
Twisted and bare he wrenches his strong foot,
And limps in tardy agony and calls,
Till all the glades re-echo, for quick aid;
And now he kneels to wait the coming beast
Whose hasty gallop, or firm trot or howl,
As struggling through the crashing bush she drives,

Hath never left his ear: soon, through the copse,
Her flaming eyeballs glare and, in a trice,
She rushes on her bold expecting foe,
Who grasps her firmly by the throat and paw
And strives to pull to earth; but cannot shun
The rending fang that in his yielding flesh
Opens the sluice of life: yet, with strong arm
And constant heart, he dares abide his lot.
True to himself, the contest he sustains
With all the means a vig'rous body gives,
And a bold mind, unscrupulous, employs.
Bruised by his knees and harmed by his strong teeth,
And almost strangled by his iron gripe,
Thrice the awed beast retires and turns to flee;
But hunger not permits and brings her back,

Unwilling to the strife. With open jaws,
Crimsoned with streaming blood, again she bounds
Against the sinking youth, half prostrate now,
And hopeless of relief; but yet, awhile,
He keeps his fate at bay: his arm is torn,
And fast relaxes his expiring strength;
Yet, still, with languid hand and feeble strain,
He holds off death: when to his ear there comes
A sudden and loud rustle of pressed boughs
And a shrill cry that made the bitch-wolf turn,
Growling in fury at another foe:
Light whizzes through the air a white-winged shaft,
Pierces her gore stained tongue and through her throat
The sharp steel barb forces its mortal way.
She howled and fled stumbling in coming death,

But unpursued. The huntress young and fair,
From whose true bow that timely arrow came,
Now knelt on the ensanguined turf where lay,
In senseless trance, the hapless fisher, steeped
In his own pure, red blood. With hasty care,
She bound his many wounds; seeking around
For healing herbs and fresh'ning water cold,
In some o'ershadowed source or rushy brook;
And while she laboured thus, in pious care,
A distant halloo came upon the wind,
Which, shrilly, she returned and to her side,
Brought the young hunter; after slight salute,
They make a bed of leaves and lay him soft,
But, yet, no symptoms of returning life
Repaid their common and assiduous love.

Hence, for more help, the maiden goes with speed,
Leaving good guard behind, that might repel
With armed hand oft-tried, the wanderer stern,
Shaggy and wild, that scent of prey should lure.
On with light foot through dewy shades she pressed,
Until she found some hinds, who, scarce, her tale,
Waited to hear, then sped away, and soon,
As she directed, to her cottage brought
The wounded youth; and, there, her aged sire,
Skill'd in the knowledge that his life required,
Smeared with sweet oil and bandaged round and round
The fisher's every hurt and laid to rest:
Next with cool bev'rage mild moistened his lips,
And slowly brought him back to feeble life

And heard the first, his few, but grateful thanks;
Then silence, grave enjoined, and named as nurse,
His gentle daughter who, with joy, accepts
And growing zeal discharged her welcome task.
And to her cottage too, full oft, repairs
The hunter true, when morning lights the skies,
Or thoughtful ev'ning drops her veil on earth.
His friend is there; is there his enemy,
But the dear danger that he might avoid,
He knows not, or embraces with such hope,
Vain but unquestioned, as o'er fresh young hearts
Hath ever evil sway. He sees her skill,
Her uncomplaining patience kind and long,
Wherewith she smooths the pillow, props the head,
Sooths the fierce pain and eases the tired limb,

And robs of weariness the idle hours,
With well-timed tale or gentle song that lulls
Or calms the aching head or troubled heart.
And thus she all relumes the vital lamp
That late, but for her happy aid, had failed.

Ah! who can see fair woman lend to man
In soft submission and full homage free,
The sum of all her powers unasked, nor feel
The need of such sweet comforter, the joy
Of being her protector, the high mark
Of all her earthly hopes, her world entire,
Centre and continent of all she owns?
This creature beautiful, this finer part,
Of our coarse nature, claims not half our smiles,

Yet wipes off all our tears: she is the rose
The gem, the essence of terrestrial life,
The hope, the pride, the honour: to our side,
She grows, its ornament supreme, and holds
Among all nations, as her best-loved due,
The very dearest title tongue can name.—
"Mother!" Oh, sacred sound! whose endless charm
Is felt wherever throbs a heart humane,
Thy echo lives among the very stars;
And tongues of Heaven repeat thee, wondering
That abject earth hath aught of such a price.
And could lean Envy hold a seat above
Thou wert her only mark below. Enough:
The heart that feels such things no babble needs
To tell him feebly what he better knows;

And such hearts had the youthful friends now housed,
Within the hunter's cot and daily fed
With sweet hopes similar; and thus their souls
Were closely knit by admiration just,
By gratitude and worth, and beauty rare,
And instinct wise, and all that binds young breasts.

CREATION.

BOOK VI.

Tale of the Hunters continued—Conclusion.

CREATION.

BOOK VI.

Thus grew between the three a bond unfelt
Unhappy, although innocent; thus grew,
Swiftly, to pain incurable, intense,
The love each felt for all: either had died,
With joy, to make the others blessed; all knew,
No blessedness would either leave behind,
Himself withdrawn: the lot of the unjust,
Inevitable ill, is, to these three,

Appointed by that law inscrutable
That earthly evil, earthly good bestows,
In seeming blindness, partial and perverse,
But neither partial nor perverse nor blind,
Could clearer eyes examine, wiser minds
Consider, or more learned tongues display,
Than such as can inhabit mortal homes.

For life is as a savage strand unknown
Whereon we wake from sleep, not knowing how
We hither came or whence: few are the spots,
Open or sunny, or fresh trimmed with flowers,
Short lived and few, by frugal nature strewn
In scant reluctant bounty; all the rest
Is a dark wood, where, hourly, thorns unseen,

Wound the way-faring foot, or bogs engulf,
Or blind abysses yawn; where every glade
Howls with a various monster, each gay bush,
Green covert or sad grove, new enemies
Hides or discloses, where our grassy couch
Covers the coiled snake, the aspic clings,
Unnoted, to the fruit we pluck and eat;
The rabid wolf is watching in the brake,
The hungry vulture hovers in the cloud:
Where fancied friends shrink from our wounded side,
While those we love oft grapple with mischance,
By us unaided; or that in strong snares
Ourselves are struggling, or our hands are bound,
Or our poor wish and humble is unprized,
Or is unknown and, like the vi'let, dies

In its sweet nest and modest shade forgot.
Or crushed by wrong respects of sex or age,
Birth, station, country, or the coarse world's law.
Yet on we go unheeding; three thick films
Invest our eyes; the first, indifference,
The second, prejudice, the thickest, last,
Is long tenacious ignorance: the leech
That lances the first coat and strips away
The primal darkness total, is fierce pain,
That lends his aid officious unto all:
And scarce his ministry is done, when, lo!
A fev'rish consciousness burns in the breast
Of horrid shapes around and snares and foes,
Masked in attire grotesque, as falsely seen
Through the distorting prism that, next,

Folds up the visual nerve, and, to the soul,
Conveys untrue intelligence; right few,
By mortal agony and groaning toil,
And many an effort high, with desp'rate hand,
Tear from the bleeding ball the second veil;
But none remove the last, through which we see,
Dimly, the forms of things; and glimm'ring light
Of some far glorious beacon, grand and high,
Shining eternal in the distant land,
Of perfect wisdom, virtue, happiness;
A trinity divine, a single good
Of triple attributes; its radiance, here,
Is pure but ineffectual, fitful light
That breaks but not dispels the shades profound
In which we live and combat and repine.

But yet there is a path that, through this wood,
Wanders obscure, chosen and loved by few;
Though safer than the broad and easy glades
That, to the right and left, num'rous decline
In rapid slopes, alluring to the feet,
But ending soon in quags or gulfs of night,
Whence hope affrighted flees, and into which,
Had strayed, incautiously, the maiden fair
And friendly rivals twain. Each told to each,
With sorrow not with shame, his secret heart;
Both wished the stars more kind, and, for their pain,
Fast growing and intense, no remedy
Sought or imagined: both sank fast and far,
In wilful grief extreme and deep declined,
Until despair his meshes o'er them cast:

'Till love's high agonies raged in their nerves
Keener than all his joys, lasting as life,
And more insufferably sharp than death.

What art thou, love? Come, urchin, at my call,
And tell me whence thy power? thou subtle foe,
Darker than night in storms, when pleases thee
To work thy wayward will; fairer than light
Dawning on falling waters, glad as spring,
Fresh as the breezy south, as fancy fine,
Sweet as the unculled flower and magical
As soft and unexpected song that fills
The wond'ring ear with sudden fall or rise
Melodious in various cadence just:
Such and so bright thou art, when, joyfully,

Thy gentle way, in summer mood thou tak'st
Right through the petty entrance of the eye,
Into the quiv'ring soul, shedding around
Thy charms divine, thy ravishing amaze,
That seems a thing of heaven. What is thine arm
So glorious, so strange? It is not youth,
It is not beauty, virtue, grace, or wit,
Or fond affection true; though under these
Thou hidest oft, yet these exist in vain
Without that latent and recondite thing
That, by thy name, we ignorantly call.

Sameness of essence in a diff'rent sex
Art thou, oh, love! though accident diverse
May ornament or vary outward show,

And cheat the eye unskilled or negligent.
Thy nature I reveal. Something there is
That changes not in man; in youth, in age,
The centre of his being, fixed it stands,
Changeless, removeless; although many forms
Will to this centre come and cleave, infixed,
Or wrenched or worn away by various chance,
Of age or education, country, fate,
Happy or evil, tranquil or disturbed:
But still the stable base remains, nor knows
Loss or decay, though in a thousand folds
E'en from ourselves concealed. It liveth on,
This substance of the soul, by nature made
Invincibly unlike or similar;
Nor ever fashioned by the meaner hands

That touch her workmanship, albeit, attired,
With various virtues, qualities, defects,
As chance or custom bids; and ever there,
Where spirits semblable encounter close,
A viewless chain enrounds them and unites.
In sexes similar 'tis friendship called,
In sexes different 'tis love. 'Tis true,
That man and woman may in friendship join,
When the whole soul is full or void; when love
His necessary flame has kindled clear,
Already, or has quenched in age. Complete,
The semiperfect life becomes, when joined
Unto its diff'rent fellow, nor allows
Abatement or increase: the measure full,
The mind made whole, the body satisfied,

And each and ev'ry faculty employed,
No more can give or take; whence comes that love
Is selfish and exclusive, friendship not;
For this is not a complement of what
Was left imperfect, but a duplicate
Of what can stand alone; while that,
Is of the thing entire, a needful half
Whose absence negatives or maims the whole.
Friendship is an attraction beautiful
That binds in peace associates similar:
Affinity of consentaneous needs
Is love, a sweet, a dear necessity
When unconstrained, but dreadful when opposed.

Rare, very rare, and fewer ev'ry hour
Are both on Earth; their names remain, their names

By folly's trumpet noised and blown about
From the far east to west; by falsehood fair
To all the vices giv'n that fest'ring wide
In her rank bosom holds society,
Lust, Avarice, Ambition, their base fronts
With myrtle garlands bind; Debauch,
Dishonesty, Injustice, Bigotry,
Theft, Cruelty, nay, darker, meaner sins,
That honour names not, dare write lover, friend,
Among their vile additions. Nor alone
These sacred names are shamelessly usurped
By bold pretenders, false as they are high
Who out of reach and danger of reproof,
In fancied dignity of noble sounds,
Live free or dream they live. Oh! sun and stars!

Ye look upon these things, nor mock aloud,
In your high places, with ethereal scorn,
This foolish generation crawling base,
Yet claiming crowns and plumes and past'ral crooks,
Laurels and bays and sculptured tombs of pride,
Or pyramids of brass or gen'ral shouts
Sincere of tiding millions; public tears,
Or firm affection honest and respect,
Because,—hear it, ye knaves to come,—ye past,
Echo it from your homes of ancient night,—
Because, in public view, at middle noon,
Ye stole the titles of great virtue all,
Razing them from her pedestal, and wore,
Shameless, these spoils throughout the cow'ring world.

Enough :—the tale of friendship and of love,
Which I forget not, calls me once again,
And I obey : back rolls my seated mind,
Calmly, to antique times, when love was love,
When friendship was not an unmeaning name ;
But both were mighty things of life and power
That swayed and honoured oft Earth's noble heirs,
Though fortune sometimes armed her cruel hand
With these as with bright arms, and haughty hearts
Struck with a mortal aim, cleaving at once,
Through hardened steel, or panoply of gold,
Or triple furs, or thick wreathed silken stole.

These fearful weapons cannot strength beat back,
Skill parry, flight elude, or courage brave,

Or wealth corrupt, or poverty avoid;
Nor wisdom heals their wounds, nor virtue's self,
Pure and immaculate, their venom shuns.

The base are safest from their harm, for they,
In huge divergence stand apart: the good
Draw to similitude: and striving aye,
By will and nature urged, to find, approach,
Or reach the single goal, sole centre, point,
Fixed indivisible, remote, unknown,
That all attracts, unites, are ever led
Each towards his fellow; like the iron dust
That to the magnet tends, in meeting rays,
Where each metallic atom feels one law,
As each resembles all. Both rivals grew

More hapless as more just, for neither could
The common good appropriate or steal,
Wronging his friend, unto whose side he pressed
Still more, as, still, the gravitating power,
That forced them to unite, but gathered strength,
As both intensely felt and owned alike
The new attraction vig'rous and the same.
Nor could they pluck away the barbed pain
That in their vitals glowed and eager drank
Their inmost life away. " God of the skies,
" And floods and forests !" cried they, when alone,
" What pain is this ? What fire that dries my flesh ?
" And burns my soul within ? What horrid cloud
" Clings to mine eyes that I cannot behold
" My friend made happy ? Oh ! my brother, friend,

" Dearer than friend, than brother more akin,
" In mercy strike me as thou dost the beast
" With thy good lance that fails not; for I feel
" I cannot love thee less or love her more,
" Therefore I cannot live, unless it be
" To make thee and myself the most accursed
" Among earth's many wretches. Let me die,
" That one of two may live, and in the skies
" I will implore the means to comfort thee,
" And to thy side invisible repair,
" Freed from this darkest hill of flesh infirm,
" When I no more shall covet things of clay,
" If chance all heaven above have holy balm
" Of power to heal my grief and thine, doubt not,
" I'll bring it down and minister to thee."

Thus madly raved they in their inward pain,
Sharper than viper's tooth or dragon's sting,
And, moaning, flitted like nocturnal ghosts
Through hideous glooms and shunned the eye of day.
The fair and guiltless virgin, of their ill
The cause and partner, lay, meantime, dissolved
In briny floods, fast gushing from the source
Exhaustless, of her grief: her rocking mind
By different lords possessed will right no more;
But in tempestuous conflict strives to death,
Herself against herself; the lamp of hope
In her dark bosom dies, and total night
Therein broods o'er all pain. Oh! could she choose,
To choose would be to live; she cannot, no,
Not madness 'self could choose, such equal might

Has each obtained, in the strong citadel,
Her fighting heart. Darkness and clouds and storm
Possess her powers, and all is lost on earth.
Deep in the murky night sits blind despair,
Bold as a murderer, fanciful and fell,
And counsels her a fearful scheme of fate,
To which she listens with an unsafe sense;
But purpose vigorous and courage high.
At morn she threads in haste the mazy wood
Seeking the hunters she had fled before
She finds them and accosts. "Fellows in ill
"Since ye have told me all, and than your pain
"I know none greater save mine own, that shares
"Both yours and is itself unshared;—that pities both
"And neither can relieve;—that hath the power

" One to make happy, yet beholds both cursed
" Beyond the wish of foes the pain of fiends:
" What shall we do? Ye know not! List to me,
" Since the great gods forget us or forsake,
" Let us from out the shunless thorns of death
" Snatch a sure remedy. Quick, come with me."

They hie unto the shore: in a light bark
They float upon the waters where the stream,
In reverence, kisses the imperious surge
And owns his vassalage: far on the tide
With hasty paddle they advance, and noon
Beholds them on the distant waters ride;—
Then stopped they and again she hoarsely spake:—
Silence was all between, for neither they

Had words to utter, nor had she, though bold,
Courage to speak the doom herself decreed.

" Look up, my brothers, to that far blue sea
" That swims above us calmly and around;
" It cannot burst the crystal vault that bounds
" And keeps it back; blinded by many tears,
" We cannot find the path that thither leads;
" But there, they say, dwell many blessed souls
" That wandered from this world, and, at deep night,
" They light their shining lamps to watch this earth
" And save from scathe and ruin; sure 'twere joy
" To be among them and their labours share.
" Why tarry then in pain, nor wrest from death
" The cunning key that opes the hidden gates,

" Of peace eternal? Wherefore 'tis withheld
" From those that languish, and unwelcome giv'n
" To such as seek it not, I not inquire;
" But know the bold heart ever hath in store
" A present mission to the distant skies.
" Away, then! shake we off this clinging flesh,
" That pains like fire, and, in yon glad abodes,
" Seek we that tearless rest, that holy joy,
" That all may share. The land is far away,
" And the fixed shore no swimmer may attain:
" Writhes the dark sea below, and his green jaws,
" Where death inhabits, he discloses wide
" And, like a thousand lions, roars for prey.
" Let us leap in and in his entrails learn,
" The justice of the skies: the remedy

" No ill can baffle, and the righteous love
" That fortune's wrong or nature's rectifies,
" And razes suffering from the book of life."

She ceased: amazement held her hearers mute;
Their dark eyes flashed despair, their quiv'ring lips
Moved in a silence horrible; no word
Murmured the dreadful feeling that convulsed
And rent their roused and full exerted hearts.
They gazed awhile through gushing tears; they shook,
And their strong knees that wont to bear them up,
Stout as a leaping fawn that seeks a brook,
Now bowed and staggered with the load of life.
One spake at last: " Oh! hapless maiden dear,
" What lot accurs'd is thine, is mine, is ours!

" Or rather what a soulless slave am I,
" To see thee thus and live: see thee, see him,
" Suffer for me! No more;—I now awake,
" Called by thy voice to virtue, and obey
" The hard command I durst not understand,—
" So vile, so recreant is this flesh I bear.
" The fight is over, and I snatch the palm
" Immortal that crowns honest deeds: farewell!
" Fall ev'ry blessing on you that the skies
" Pour on the good made happy; now farewell,
" I go to meet the fathers of mankind
" In their bright homes above. Forget me not;
" Accept my blessings warm as my true heart,
" Pure as my love, and strong as my resolve:
" Run out your course on earth but think on me,—

" I watch you both meanwhile, and when the thread
" Of many colours is all spun, we meet
" On high, in mighty palaces of air." He plunged,
With unexpected motion, as he spake,
And, with a downward rush, the surges clave
Impetuous : a thrilling shriek, a groan,
Burst on the wind and told the distant skies
That a brave spirit had now fled from earth.

Fast through the brine, meanwhile, the diver sank ;
The darkening billows, deep'ning, veiled in haste
His noble form that struggled onward, hard,
To gain the bowers of rest, hid in the night
Of central waters ; and, right soon, he reached
The black abyss whence never ray arose

To bring to human eye the doleful hues
Of prisons submarine. He disappeared
Like metal reddening in fire, or bird
Lost in concealing leaves, or sudden smoke
Diffused in viewless air. Roll on the waves,
But never in their ripple rises more
The self-devoted human sacrifice.

The lightened bark floats by, as the proud tide,
In unexpected vict'ry insolent,
Unruly and unmannerly, compels;
Sighed o'er the scene of death a sudden wind,
And a fair passing cloud dropt plenteous tears
Upon the liquid grave, now closed and sealed
For ever from all search. The lonely two,

Sat silent, awed; their pent and prisoned souls,
Barred by the strong amaze, no powers command,
Save the deluded sight which, fast, they fix,
Eager and vainly, on the shapeless flood.

And first the fisher's swelling heart broke way
As a new vision o'er his spirit rose.
" Thy father, damsel, ah, thy father dear!
" Hast thou then him forgotten, aged, blind,
" Poor and alone, and in a wood forlorn,
" By all abandoned? Live for him, not me;
" I shun thee now; I hate thee like a sin,
" Since I have paid a price beyond thy worth,
" To purchase not thy heart, but thy embrace;
" Not even thy embrace; for that belongs

" Only to him who, in the roaring depths,
" Has gained pre-eminence and title good
" To what on earth is matchless, to thy charms,
" For me too many, but, alas! too few
" To pay thy debt to him, or me absolve
" From guilt of unprevented ill. Yet live,
" For the earth claims thee still,—and, to thy sire
" The dues unpaid forbid thy wand'ring hence.
" Live then thou beauteous bane that I thought good,
" Nor knew mine error till this dire event
" That maddens me and thee. To my torn side
" Thou canst not be a yokefellow, alas!
" Evil shuns evil though alike, and we,
" Are by resemblance sundered: and again,

" I inly bleed unseen, and hold my life
" As the cloud holds its purple of the sun,—
" One fleeting moment lent, the next, resumed
" Its light, its splendour, and it hangs unprized,
" A shroud upon the colourless expanse,
" When the sun dips his orb: my sun is set
" In that same western sea; I am the cloud
" Dishonoured in a firmament of gloom."

Thus woeful were the words that to the ear
Of the rapt maiden rose, through choking sighs:
Nor answered she at once; but gazed, as loath,
Or half unable, all to comprehend.
At length her voice was loosened from its bonds,
And thus she spake in pain. " To me no more,

" Can come, or happy hours, or peace be known,
" Or sire, or social ease or honest love.
" Thou art a thing forbidden to my hopes,
" Not by my sin nor thine, nor by the law
" Left us by him whose rocking pillow cold
" Is the fond lap of amorous mermaid now,
" In the sea-solitudes beneath. My sire!
" Ah, name him not to such a wretch as I,
" Who am not worthy to embrace his knees,
" Or kiss the dust he treads! he is too good,
" Too wise, too holy to have need of me,
" Nor will he deign, from his unhappy child,
" T' accept the services by her withdrawn,
" Though not until her feeble and light powers
" Were wrung beyond endurance. Name not him:

" Thou pourest poison in my wounded ears

" Where bubbles, still, the voice of recent death.

" My father hath a staff of ancient trust

" In the tried loves of virtuous hearts around,

" That never left affliction unconsoled;

" But what have I? Say that:—Thy hate, mine own,

" A conscience troubled, and a soul forlorn,

" A bosom where a million raging fiends

" Are wound into one knot inextricable:

" But the dark comforter we saw so late,

" Is ever nigh and, in his fleshless arms,

" Shall lock me from myself. Adieu, adieu!

" I leave thee lonely, but thy bosom heals,

" By mighty wisdom charmed; I gladly go,

" Where evil is forgotten. Nay, forbear!

" Give not thy blessed hands, and beautiful,
" An impious and vain employ. Hold off!
" I am a victim sacred to the ire
" Of Gods offended and of Nature wronged,
" Wronged and offended deeply, since by me,
" One of the two bright gems that lighted earth,
" Their dearest, loftiest labour, and their pride,
" Is lustreless, is gone; stolen from the shrine,
" And in the deep sea buried and despised.
" Forgive me if I leave thee here alone;
" Rather I leave thee not, for my freed soul,
" With his, thy brother's, shall, for ever fond,
" For ever faithful, close around thee tend,
" 'Till thou canst meet us sexless as ourselves,
" Painless as air, and liberal as heaven."

Her lover listened sad, relaxed his grasp,
And sighing answered. " Maiden, I forbear ;
" For since to die in our election stands,
" And thou hast chosen, vain were my dissent;
" Useless delay that lengthens pain, not cures,
" And bootless means that but oppose, not stop,
" The speeding purpose. Thou art free; but list
" Upon thy joyless journey not alone,
" Not unprotected shalt thou go. Behold!
" We will fare forth together. Not my arm
" From aught can save or shield thee. What is man,
" Meted with power divine? The smallest grain
" Of summer's lightest dust were, to the winds
" In fury meeting on the tumbling main,
" A greater let; nay, more; the unfelt beam

" That touches earth with light, shall sooner far
" Crush the firm mass and pulverize to nought,
" Than man undo the adamantine chain
" That to the will supreme links each effect,
" Though petty, though unnoted, undiscerned.
" Yet to thy side I come to parry harm.
" Alas! I rave and my rebellious thoughts
" Take my mind captive and disease my soul,
" That knows no law beyond the vig'rous will
" To follow thee, through punishment or joy,
" Matchless, eternal, inconceivable.
" Chance then what may." He said and raised his hand
That griped a heavy spear: down rushed the point,
Driv'n by an arm of steel in phrenzy moved,

And tore the bottom of the frail canoe.
With fatal force up through the mortal gash,
Hissing like unfed snakes, the hungry waves
Sprang eager. Soon the shallow bark was filled,
And, like a thing in pain, with motion strange,
Heaved once or twice, then heeled and slowly sank,—
Leaving them, sadly, like a hope foregone.

Both drank the cold salt tide: the fisher's arm
Upheld the dying huntress, and he cried,
" Oh, fatal maiden dear! forgive me still,
" If I put back the bitter cup of fate,
" That both may taste together, or, that I,
" Stronger than thou, may waste, in combat vain,
" That strength superfluous, and still precede,

" Though but a little, on the unknown path,
" Beset with shadows horrible and drear,
" We both, in equal helplessness, must tread.
" Hang on me, dearest." She complied; they swam,
Perchance an hour, in silence, and then sank;
Then rose again and struggled,—sank once more,—
And once again arose, exhausted quite;
Yet still his manly vigour baffled death;
When, hark! close to their ears a shout, a call,
A hurried dash of oars and voices loud,
Scarce heard or heeded 'mid the pains of death,
As sense forsook them. Soon a boat drew nigh
Filled with fond friends that for long anxious hours
Had sought them on the main, alarmed to search
By a wild tale, brought by two lisping babes

That playing on the sands, at early morn,
Had seen the haggard forms and dancing bark
Shoot seaward, reckless of the howling tide.
With hasty care, the senseless bodies stark,
They ravished from the disappointed sea,
And homeward bore amazed. Cold were they both,
And, on the maiden's cheek, had death unfurled,
The purple flag of victory complete;
But in the bosom of the fisher true,
Lingered, uncertain or to come or go,
A spark of latent life, which, fanned with care,
Gradual enlarged and shone,—then glowed,—then flamed
Into full power again. But long the strife
Ere the sad spirit to his shaken throne
Again ascended and the sceptre held

O'er his disturbed dominions in soft peace.
How he awoke, at last, and shook away
The chains of sinful grief, and patient lived,
And waited long, in wise, in humble pain,
The call of Him who, from beyond the clouds
Resistless calls when the full hour is ripe,
In aftertimes the poet may record:
Suffice it now, he lived: not so the maid;
Low in a grassy grave, beside the spring
Within the secret wood, where first she knew
Love and affliction, in unwonted rest,
She sleeps for ever: pale flowers spring around,
Within a rustic fence, and on the sod,
Amid the gloom of melancholy trees,
At morn, at eve, there sits an aged man,

Weeping from rayless eyes abundant tears;
And, by his side, a nobler, youthful form,
That on his shoulders bears a net and bow,
Kneels rev'rendly, and often prays and sighs;
Then rising scatters lavish, new culled sweets
That fill the air with balm. This done they rise,
And to a distant cottage slow repair,
Each aiding each, with comfortable words,
And many gentle offices of love.

The tale is done, the teller is released,
And gladly closes here his mournful song—
Too sad, perchance, for summer trifiers bright
Who live on dainty air and perfumed dreams
And golden thoughts of love and falsehoods gay

That lend unreal beauty to the world,
But vanish soon like rainbow from the shower:
Or those who bask, delighted, in the glare
Of punished passions that, in words of fire,
Pour out their lava of consuming hate
On man offending or on woman frail;
And, in immortal poetry, embalm
The errors of a mind magnificent;
That in blaspheming song, sonorous, high,
To distant ages in their solemn flow
With heart religious, irreligious head,
And metaphysic levity perverse,
Arraign the power that all must love or fear.
Nor these I hope to please, nor those,
Who o'er the smallest feather of the wren,

Or trampled leaf, from fading blossom fall'n,
Or glance of dove-eyed ripple in the stream,
Or play of moonlight on a tumbling cloud,
Or causeless sigh, from infant lungs outbreathed,
Or blue eyes glist'ring in abundant drops,
Or passing blush on maiden's pallid cheek,
Or lightest feeling of the smallest nerve,
Waste unreturning time in musing grave,
On trifles poor as nought: nor the good word
Hope I to gain of those who tell, in verse,
Tales that no verse can ornament or raise
Enough to win their way to noble minds;
Or self-complacent, in a scrannel style,
Some flimsy quirk in vulgar jargon sing,
Through the great city, to nice judging ears,

That symmetry of sound, not scope of thought,
Inspect, to stigmatize Bœotian phrase,
Mindless of Theban fire; but, kind, absolve,
Rhyme metropolitan, and crank, and jest,
And quibble of the market or the street.

I to the bosom's home of homes would find
The way occult, and wake a chord therein
That long has slept, though its vibration clear,
Loud as a trump celestial, and as sweet,
Might wake the world to happiness supreme,
If touched by other hands; but, now, alas!
Wearied by many thoughts of woe and pain,
I pause, and from the harp my hand withdraw:
Languid and worn, my spirit asks repose;

Low sinks my voice in sighs; o'er my full heart,
In darkness, flows the vision of the past;
And vainly, in this valley drear, I seek
Morning, and hope, and joy. Involved in night,
Black and impervious, sink the sons of men
Around me, and the foppish things of earth.

Long may I wait perchance and wander here,
Looking impatiently for rising light,
Streaming, enormous, from the moral noon,
Of love fraternal, whence, benignant, flow
Nourishment vigorous, and sweet increase
Of virtue operant and honour true,
Friendship, affection, faith, self-sacrifice,
Beloved in upmost heaven, when greatly made,

Electively, to swell the public good.
Nor more abundant from the secret urn,
Jacent on rocks where gravitation ends,
And feeding ocean with his surging waves,
More gen'ral, more diffusive springs the tide,
In bounty, offering majestic Earth
Neighbourliness and gentle ministry.
All foyson of sweet sap and means of life
Nobly the ocean yields unto the land,
Dropping his fatness on woods, hills and plains,
Sending through tree and flower, and shrub and grain,
Amazing aliment, that ev'ry form
Replenishes, upholds and beautifies.
And love fraternal is, like this, a source
Hourly productive e'en of greater good.

Of song eternal, sweet as innocence,
Feeble, although melodious and clear,
Through the loud chorus of rejoicing vice
A sacred law proclaiming to the ear
Uncharmed by all the syrens singing loud,
Naming and promising forbidden joys.
The law that, sweetly taught and wisely heard,
Obey and bless and honour all the good,
Named in heaven's golden records. But the hour,
Idlers and scorners! comes when you will wake,—
Not proudly, nor indifferent, as now—
Shaking with late remorse or mad surprise,
Over the past ye glance a coward eye,
Meeting th' accusing ghosts of time misused,
Evil embraced with pride, rejected good,

Ruins of great intentions feebly based,
Shadows of virtuous thoughts in pleasure lost,
E'en as they rose to view. A phantom train,
Too late examined and too truly seen,
Exasperating, justly, the great judge
No sinner can evade, no tyrant brave.
Go, then, and chastened live! although to few,
Lonely and lost in pain, your succouring hands
Are kindly stretched in aid; yet all your faults,
Never can raze you wholly from my heart,
Deep wounded, but forgiving and at rest.
A throng of petty wants scorned but obeyed,
A squatting nightmare, ugly as dismay,
A den beset with goblin shapes and foes,
Is life to me,—to many; lent to some,

It is not so tyrannical and stern.

I gaze around me now, half shamed, and see,

Revel is up and antic carnival

Laughs out aloud, and, in the public walk,

Flouts at the sun; whereat wisdom abashed

Hies to the cloister grave and bolts the door,

To cogitate in peace; while to the ear,

Unasked, come huddled peals of ribald mirth,

Of jest or laugh, or shout or rush of sound,

In hasty change waiting on lifted heels,

Or lost in scuffle of fast shifting feet,

In mazy motion foolishly alert:

But with these sounds come others, comes a cry

Feeble, but dreary, long and horrible,

Of pain unpitied, hunger unappeased,

Of suffering despised or unredressed,
By nature's deep rebuke severe or man's,
Slow wrung, but surely, from the human wretch.
And, farther off, groans on the dark'ning air
A knell of sudden death: the reveller
One moment stands aghast, as through the din
That dull sound makes its way, and on his ear
Jars harshly; but anon, the mellow flute
Or voice attuned to joy, pours unctuous balm
Upon the pained sense; folly revives,
Seizes the reins of life, adjusts the mask,
Forgets the passing bell, and sports anew.

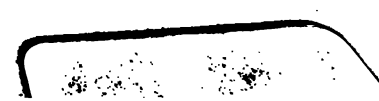
Clad in our mortal weeds, a vesture strange,
Which all put on unwillingly, we come,
Boldly or heedlessly, in pain or peace,

Or wisdom, as the sheathed spirit bids,
Or vanity, or doubt or wickedness,
And hooded with a native cap and bells,
Look grave and turn the page of human life
From title to conclusion, poring slow
Upon the dark and mystic text; nor learn,
Clearly, one lesson of the sense obscure
That the full volume holds. Ages roll by,
And the same book unfolds its awful leaves
To poets, sages, jesters, fools; yet none
Find the hard meaning out; the curious writ
Is ever read, is ever commented,—
Still the first letter and the final line,
In equal ignorance, are pondered o'er.
Yet sure such goodly writing must contain
Something of price and power; some tidings glad;

Since learned nature to the total world
Opens the wondrous tome and reads it through.

Life is a tale begun, whose hast'ning close
Will make the matter clear; the mystery
Elucidate or solve; the incidents
However wild, explain and justify.
It is a secret, told in a strange tongue,
Whose meaning high and use is locked from us,
By ign'rance of the language: but, anon,
Comes the great author and, himself, translates
The whole and makes us fully satisfied.
'Tis a disease, an ague of the soul
And hath one only remedy, which Time,
Surely and equally, prepares for all.
'Tis wisdom then to keep the end in view

And from this sickness learn the prudence meet,
To welcome gladly the great hour of health.

Go, then! oh, man! and ev'ry good pursue,
Make clear thy title to the opening skies,
And the foul grave to which thou passest fast
Sweeten, illuminate, and sanctify
With precious odour and bright light serene;
Odour of charity and light of hope,
And holiness of virtue. If again
We chance to meet, my grateful task shall be
To lead thee forward on the sunny path,
Far as I can descry. Now, pause my song.

GLENNELL AND SHEARMAN, SALISBURY SQUARE.